SONOMA COUNTY LIBRARY
3 7565 00566 344 7

DISCARDED

CENTRAL

TERHUNE, ALBERT PAYSON, 18
LOCHINVAR LUCK /

C1923.
37565005663447 CENT

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_W9-CUG-812

LOCHINVAR LUCK

ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

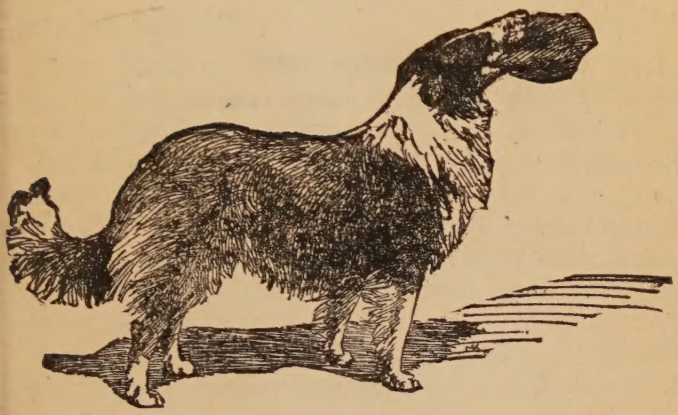
"I have been asked if the charac-
Lochinvar

LOCHINVAR LUCK

By

Albert Payson Terhune

Author of TREVE, WOLF,
BUFF: A COLLIE,
THE WAY OF A DOG, etc.



22680
HEALDSBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY

GROSSET & DUNLAP
Publishers *New York*

BY ARRANGEMENT WITH DOUBLEDAY, DORAN & COMPANY, INC.

COPYRIGHT, 1923,
BY GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

LOCHINVAR LUCK. I

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEDICATION

GEORGE HORACE LORIMER, Esq.
Editor of *The Saturday Evening Post,*
Philadelphia.

Dear Mr. Lorimer:

When Lochinvar Bobby scratched timidly for admittance at the close-guarded covers of *The Saturday Evening Post,* you gave him a right gracious welcome.

You made him feel joyously at home in those pleasant quarters, off and on, for the best part of a year. And you enabled him to win a host of friends whom he never could have hoped to meet through any lesser introduction.

All of which was an egregious stroke of luck for him and for his creator.

Both of us are grateful. And you have put us still deeper in your debt, by permitting me to dedicate to you this book of Bobby's exploits.

Albert Payson Terhune

"Sunnybank,"
Pompton Lakes,
New Jersey.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I:	THE COMING OF LOCHINVAR BOBBY	11
II:	SILVER MAGIC	66
III:	THE HEAVIER WEIGHT	104
IV:	FALSE COLORS	151
V:	BOOTLEGERDEMAIN	188
VI:	THE TEST	225
VII:	FELLOW-SINNERS	266
	AFTERWORD	306

LOCHINVAR LUCK

LOCHINVAR LUCK

CHAPTER I: THE COMING OF LOCHINVAR BOBBY

WHEN the first Angus Mackellar left his ancestral Lochbuy moors he brought to America the big, shaggy, broad-headed collie dog he loved—the dog that had helped him herd his employer's sheep for the past five years.

Man and dog landed at Castle Garden a half century ago. From that time on, as for three hundred years earlier, no member of the Mackellar family was without a collie; the best and wisest to be found.

Evolution narrowed the heads and lightened the stocky frames of these collies, as the decades crawled past.

Evolution changed the successive generations of Mackellars not at all, except to rub smoother their Highland burr and to make them serve America as ardently as ever their forefathers had served Scotland. But not one of them lost his hereditary love for the dog of the moors.

Which brings us by degrees to Jamie Mackel-

22680

PUBLIC LI

lar, grandson of the emigrating Angus. Jamie was twenty-eight. His tough little body was so meagerly spare that his big heart and bigger soul were almost indecently exposed. For the rest, his speech still held an occasional word or two of handed-down ancestral dialect. In moments of excitement these inherited phrases came thicker; and with them a tang of Scots accent.

Jamie lived in the cheapest suburb of Midwestburg, and in one of the suburb's cheapest houses. But the house had a yard. And the yard harbored a glorious old collie, a rare prize winner in his day. The house in front of the yard, by the way, harbored Jamie's Yorkshire wife and their two children, Elspeth and Donald.

Jamie divided his home time between the house and the open. So—after true Highland fashion—did the collie.

There were long rambles in the forests and the wild half-cleared land beyond the suburb; walks that meant as much to Jamie as to the dog, after the Scot had been driving a contractor's truck six days of the week for a monthly wage of seventy-five dollars.

Now, on seventy-five dollars a month many a family lives in comfort. But the sum leaves scant margin for the less practical luxuries of life. And in a sheepless and law-abiding region a high-quality collie is a nonpractical luxury. Yet

Jamie would almost as soon have thought of selling one of his thick-legged children as of accepting any of the several good offers made him for the beautiful dog which had been his chum for so many years, the dog whose prize ribbons and cups from a score of local shows made gay the trophy corner of the Mackellar kitchen-parlor.

Then, on a late afternoon,—when the grand old collie was galloping delightedly across the street to meet his home-returning master,—a delivery motor car, driven by a speed-drunk boy, whizzed around the corner on the wrong side of the way.

The big dog died as he had lived—gallantly and without a whine. Gathering himself up from the muck of the road he walked steadfastly forward to meet the fast-running Mackellar. As Jamie bent down to search the mired body for injuries, the collie licked his master's dear hand, shivered slightly and fell limp across the man's feet.

When the magistrate next morning heard that a mouth-foaming little Scot had sprung upon the running board of a delivery car and had hauled therefrom a youth of twice his size and had hammered the said youth into 100 per cent. eligibility for a hospital cot, he listened gravely to the other side of the story and merely fined Jamie one dollar.

The released prisoner returned with bent head and barked knuckles to a house which all at once had been left unto him desolate. For the first time in centuries a Mackellar was without a collie.

During the next week the Midwestburg Kennel Association's annual dog show was held at the Fourth Regiment Armory. This show was one of the banner events of the year throughout Western dog circles. Its rich cash specials and its prestige even drew breeders from the Atlantic States to exhibit thereat the best their kennels afforded.

Thither, still hot and sore of heart, fared Jamie Mackellar. Always during the three days of the Midwestburg dog show Jamie took a triple holiday and haunted the collie section and the ringside. Here more than once his dead chum had won blue ribbon and cash over the exhibits from larger and richer kennels. And at such times Jamie Mackellar had rejoiced with a joy that was too big for words, and which could express itself only in a furtive hug of his collie's shaggy ruff.

To-day, as usual, Jamie entered the barnlike armory among the very first handful of spectators. To his ears the reverberant clangor of a thousand barks was as battle music; as it echoed from the girdered roof and yammered incessantly on the eardrums.

As ever, he made his way at once to the collie section. A famous New York judge was to pass upon this breed. And there was a turnout of nearly sixty collies; including no less than five from the East. Four of these came from New Jersey; which breeds more high-class collies than do any three other states in the Union.

It was Jamie's rule to stroll through the whole section, for a casual glance over the collies, before stopping at any of the benches for a closer appraisal. But to-day he came to a halt, before he had traversed the first row of stalls. His pale-blue eyes were riveted on a single dog.

Lying at lazily majestic ease on the straw of a double-size bench was a huge dark-sable collie. Full twenty-six inches high at the shoulder and weighing perhaps seventy-five pounds, this dog gave no hint of coarseness or of oversize. He was molded as by a super-sculptor. His well-sprung ribs and mighty chest and leonine shoulders were fit complements to the classically exquisite yet splendidly strong head.

His tawny coat was as heavy as a bison's mane. The outer coat—save where it turned to spun silk, on the head—was harsh and wavy. The under coat was as impenetrably soft as the breast of an eider duck. From gladiator shoulders the gracefully powerful body sloped back to hips which spoke of lightning speed and endurance. The

tulip ears had never known weights or pincers. The head was a true wedge, from every viewpoint. The deep-set dark eyes were unbelievably perfect in expression and placement.

Here was a collie! Here was a dog whose sheer perfection made Jamie Mackellar catch his breath for wonder, and then begin pawing frantically at his show catalogue. He read, half aloud:

729: *Lochinvar Kennels. CHAMPION LOCHINVAR KING. Lochinvar Peerless—Lochinvar Queen*

Followed the birth date and the words "Breeder owner."

Jamie Mackellar's pale eyes opened yet wider and he stared on the collie with tenfold interest; an interest which held in it a splash of reverence. Jamie was a faithful reader of the dog press. And for the past two years Champion Lochinvar King's many pictures and infinitely more victories had stirred his admiration. He knew the dog, as a million Americans know Man-o'-War.

Now eagerly he scanned the wonder collie. Every detail,—from the level mouth and chiseled, wedge-shaped head and stern eyes with their true "look of eagles," to the fox brush tail with its sidewise swirl at the tip—Jamie scanned with the delight of an artist who comes for the first time on a Velasquez of which he has read and dreamed.

Never in his dog-starred life had the little man beheld so perfect a collie. It was an education to him to study such a marvel.

Two more men came up to the bench. One was wearing a linen duster; and fell to grooming King's incredibly massive coat with expert hands. The other—a plump giant in exaggeratedly vivid clothes—chirped to the dog and ran careless fingers over the silken head. The collie waved his plumed tail in response to the caress. Recalling how coldly King had ignored his own friendly advances, Jamie Mackellar addressed the plump man in deep respect.

"Excuse me, sir," said he humbly, "but might you be Mr. Frayne—Mr. Lucius Frayne?"

The man turned with insolent laziness, eyed the shabby little figure from head to foot, and nodded. Then he went back to his inspection of King.

Not to be rebuffed, Mackellar continued:

"I remember reading about you when you started the Lochinvar Kennels, sir. That'll be—let's see—that'll be the best part of eight years ago. And three years back you showed Lochinvar Peerless out here—this great feller's sire. I'm proud to meet you, sir."

Frayne acknowledged this tribute by another nod, this time not even bothering to turn toward his admirer.

Mackellar pattered on:

"Peerless got Americanbred and Limit, that year; and he went to Reserve Winners. If I'd 'a' been judging, I'd of gave him Winners, over Rivers Pride, that topped him. Pride was a good inch-and-a-half too short in the brush. And the sable grew away too far from his eyes. Gave 'em a roundish, big look. He was just a wee peckle overshot too. And your Peerless outshowed him, besides. But, good as Peerless was, he wasn't a patch on this son of his you've got here today. Losh, but it sure looks like you was due to make a killing, Mr. Frayne."

And now the Eastern breeder deigned to face the man whose words were pattering so meekly into his heedless ears. Frayne realized this little chap was not one of the ignorant bores who pester exhibitors at every big show; but that he spoke, and spoke well, the language of the initiate. No breeder is above catering to intelligent praise of his dog. And Frayne warmed mildly toward the devotee.

"Like him, do you?" he asked, indulgently.

"Like him?" echoed Mackellar. "*Like* him? Man, he's fifty per cent the best I've set eyes on. And I've seen a hantle of 'em."

"Take him down, Roke," Frayne bade his linen-dustered kennel man. "Let him move about a bit. You can get a real idea of him when you see his

action," he continued to the dazzled Mackellar. "How about that? Hey?"

At the unfastening of his chain, Lochinvar King stepped majestically to the floor and for an instant stood gazing up at his master. He stood as might an idealized statue of a collie. Mackellar caught his breath and stared. Then with expert eyes he watched the dog's perfect action as the kennel man led him up and down for half a dozen steps.

"He's—he's better even than I thought he could be," sighed Jamie. "He looked too good to be true. Lord, it does tickle a man's heartstrings to see such a dog! I—I lost a mighty fine collie a few days back," he went on confidingly. "Not in King's class, of course, sir. But a grand old dog. And—and he was my chum, too. I'm fair sick with greeting over him. It kind of crumples a feller, don't it, to lose a chum collie? One reason I wanted to come here early to-day was to look around and see were any of the for-sale ones inside my means. I've never been without a collie before. And I want to get me one—a reg'lar first-rater, like the old dog—as quick as I can. It's lonesome-like not to have a collie laying at my feet, evening times; or running out to meet me."

Lucius Frayne listened now with real interest to the little man's timid plaint.

As Mackellar paused, shamefaced at his own

non-Scottish show of feeling, the owner of the Lochinvar Kennels asked suavely:

"What were you counting on paying for a new dog? Or hadn't you made up your mind?"

"Once in a blue moon," replied Mackellar, "a pretty good one is for sale, cheap. Either before the judging or if the judge don't happen to fancy his type. I—well, if I had to, I was willing to spend a hundred—if I could get the right dog. But I tholed maybe I could get one for less."

Still more interestedly did Frayne beam down on the earnest little Mackellar.

"It's a pity you can't go higher," said he with elaborate nonconcern. "Especially since King here has caught your fancy. You see, I've got a four-month pup of King's, back home. Out of my winning Lochinvar Lassie, at that. I sold all the other six in the litter. Sold 'em at gilt-edge prices; on account of their breeding. This little four-monther I'm speaking about—he was so much the best of the lot that I was planning to keep him. He's the dead image of what King was at his age. He's got 'future champion' written all over him. But—well, since you've lost your chum dog and since you know enough of collies to treat him right—well, if you were back East where you could look him over, I'd—well, I'd listen to your offer for him."

He turned toward his kennel man as if end-

ing the talk. Like a well-oiled phonograph, the linen-dustered functionary spoke up.

"Oh, Mr. Frayne!" he blithered, ceasing to groom King's wondrous coat and clasping both dirty hands together. "You wouldn't ever go and sell the little 'un? Not Lochinvar Bobby, sir? Not the best pup we ever bred? Why, he's 20 per cent better than what King, here, was at his age. You'll make a champion of him by the time he's ten months old. Just like Doc Burrows did with his Queen Betty. He's a second Howgill Rival, that pup is;—a second Sunnybank Sigurd! You sure wouldn't go selling him? Not Bobby?"

"There'll be other Lochinvar King pups along in a few weeks, Roke," argued Frayne conciliatingly. "And this man has just lost his only dog. If—— What a pair of fools we are!" he broke off, laughing loudly. "Here we go gabbling about selling Bobby, and our friend, here, isn't willing to go above a hundred dollars for a dog!"

The kennel man, visibly relieved, resumed operations on King with dandy-brush and cloth. But Mackellar stood looking up at Frayne as a hungry pup might plead dumbly with some human who had just taken from him his dinner bone.

"If—if he's due to be a second Lochinvar King," faltered Jamie, "I—I s'pose he'd be way beyond me. I'm a truck driver, you see, sir. And

I've got a wife and a couple of kids. So I wouldn't have any right to spend too much, just for a dog—even if I had the cash. But—gee, but it's a chance!"

Sighing softly in renunciation, he took another long and admiring gaze at the glorious Lochinvar King; and then made as though to move away. But Lucius Frayne's dog-loving heart evidently was touched by Jamie's admiration for the champion and by the hinted tale of his chum dog's death. He stopped the sadly departing Mackellar.

"Tell me more about that collie you lost," he urged. "How'd he die? What was his breeding? Ever show him?"

Now perhaps there breathes some collie man who can resist one of those three questions about his favorite dog. Assuredly none lives who can resist all three. Mackellar, in a brace of seconds, found himself prattling eagerly to this sympathetic giant; telling of his dog's points and wisdom and lovableness, and of the prizes he had won; and, last of all, the tale of his ending.

Frayne listened avidly, nodding his head and grunting consolation from time to time. At last he burst forth, on impulse:

"Look here! You know dogs. You know collies. I see that. I'd rather have a Lochinvar pup go to a man who can appreciate him, as you

would, and who'd give him the sort of home you'd give him, than to sell him for three times as much, to some mucker. I'm in this game for love of the breed, not to skin my neighbors. Lochinvar Bobby is yours, friend, for a hundred and fifty dollars. I hope you'll say no," he added with his loud laugh, "because I'd rather part with one of my back teeth. But anyhow I feel decenter for making the offer."

Pop-eyed and scarlet and breathing fast, Jamie Mackellar did some mental arithmetic. One hundred and fifty dollars was a breath-taking sum. Nobody knew it better than did he. But—oh, there stood Lochinvar King! And King's best pup could be Jamie's for that amount.

Then Mackellar bethought him of an extra job that was afloat just now in Midwestburg—a job at trucking explosives by night from the tesladite factory, over on the heights, to the railroad. It was a job few people cared for. The roads were joggly. And tesladite was a ticklish explosive. Even the company's offer of fifty dollars a week, at short hours, had not brought forth many volunteer chauffeurs.

Yet Jamie was a careful driver. He knew he could minimize the risk. And by working three hours a night for three weeks he could clean up the price of the wonderful pup without going down into the family's slim funds.

"You're—you're on!" he babbled, shaking all over with pure happiness. "In three weeks I'll send you a money order. Here's—here's—let's see—here's twenty-seven dollars to bind the bargain."

"Roke," said Frayne, ignoring his kennel man's almost weeping protests, "scribble out a bill of sale for Lochinvar Bobby. And see he's shipped here the day we get this gentleman's money order for the balance of $150. And don't forget to send him Bobby's papers at the same time. Seeing it's such a golden bargain for him, he'll not grudge paying the expressage, too. I suppose I'm a wall-eyed fool, but—say! Hasn't a man got to do a generous action once in a while? Besides, it's all for the good of the breed."

Ten minutes later Mackellar tore away his ardent eyes from inspection of the grand dog whose best pup he was so soon to earn, and pattered on down the collie section.

Then and then only did Lucius Frayne and Roke look at each other. Long and earnestly they looked. And Frayne reached out his thick hand and shook his kennel man's soiled fingers. He shook them with much heartiness. He was a democratic sportsman, this owner of the famed Lochinvar Kennels. He did not disdain to grasp the toil-hardened hand of his honest servitor; especially at a time like this.

Lochinvar King that day clove his path straight through "Open, Sable-and-White" and "Open, any Color," to "Winners;" in a division of fifty-eight collies. Then he annexed the cup and the forty dollars in cash awards for Best of Breed; also four other cash specials. And in the classic special for Best Dog in Show he came as near to winning as ever a present-day collie can hope to at so large a show. Jamie Mackellar, with a vibrating pride and a sense of personal importance, watched and applauded every win of his pup's matchless sire.

"In another year," he mused raptly, "I'll be scooping up them same specials with King's gorgeous little son. This man Frayne is sure one of the fellers that God made."

Four weeks and two days later, a past-worthy slatted crate, labeled "Lochinvar Collie Kennels," was delivered at Jamie's door. It arrived a bare ten minutes after Mackellar came home from work. All the family gathered around it in the kitchen; while, with hands that would not stay steady, the head of the house proceeded to unfasten the clamps which held down its top.

It was Jamie Mackellar's great moment, and his wife and children were infected almost to hysteria by his long-sustained excitement.

Back went the crate lid. Out onto the kitchen floor shambled a dog.

For a long minute, as the new-arrived collie stood blinking and trembling in the light, everybody peered at him without word or motion. Jamie's jaw had gone slack, at first sight of him. And it still hung supine; making the man's mouth look like a frog penny bank's.

The puppy was undersized. He was scrawny and angular and all but shapeless. At a glance, he might have belonged to any breed or to many breeds or to none. His coat was sparse and short and kinky; and through it glared patches of lately-healed eczema. The coat's color was indeterminate, what there was of it. Nor had four days in a tight crate improved its looks.

The puppy's chest was pitifully narrow. The sprawly legs were out at elbow and cow-hocked. The shoulders were noteworthy by the absence of any visible sign of them. The brush was an almost hairless rat-tail. The spine was sagged and slightly awry.

But the head was the most direful part of the newcomer. Its expressionless eyes were sore and dull. Its ears hung limp as a setter's. The nose and foreface were as snubbily broad as a Saint Bernard's. The slack jaw was badly overshot. The jowls showed a marked tendency to cheekiness and the skull seemed to be developing an apple-shaped dome in place of the semi-platform which the top of a collie's head ought to present.

Breed dogs as carefully and as scientifically as you will; once in a way some such specimen will be born into even the most blue-blooded litter;—a specimen whose looks defy all laws of clean heredity; a specimen which it would be gross flattery to call a mutt.

One of three courses at such times can be followed by the luckless breeder: To kill the unfortunate misfit; to give it away to some child who may or may not maul it to death; or to swindle a buyer into paying a respectable price for it.

Thriftily, Lucius Frayne had chosen the third course. And no law could touch him for the deal. He had played as safe, in his dirty trade, as does any vivisector.

Mackellar had bought the dog, sight unseen. Frayne had guaranteed nothing save the pedigree, which was flawless. He had said the creature was the image of King at the same age. But he had said it in the presence of no witness save his own kennel man. And the statement, in any event, was hard of refutal by law.

No; Frayne, like many another shrewd professional dog breeder, had played safe. And he had annexed one hundred and fifty dollars, in peril-earned hoardings, for a beast whose true cash value was less than eight cents to any one. He had not even bothered to give the cur a high-sounding pedigree name.

There stood, or crouched, the trembling and whimpering wisp of worthlessness; while the Mackellar family looked on in dumb horror. To add to the pup's ludicrous aspect, an enormous collar hung dangling from his neck. Frayne had been thrifty, in even this minor detail. Following the letter of the transportation rules, he had "equipped the dog with suitable collar and chain." But the chain, which Jamie had unclasped in releasing the pup from the crate, had been a thing of rust and flimsiness. The collar had been outworn by some grown dog. To keep it from slipping off over the puppy's head Roke had fastened to it a twist of wire, whose other end was enmeshed in the scattering short hairs of the youngster's neck. From this collar's ring still swung the last year's license tag of its former wearer.

It was little Elspeth who broke the awful spell of silence.

"Looks—looks kind of—of measly, don't he?" she volunteered.

"Jamie Mackellar!" shrilled her mother, finding voice and wrath in one swift gasp. "You—you went and gambled with your life on them explosion trucks—and never told me a word about it till it was over—just to earn money to buy—to buy—*that!"*

Then Jamie spoke. And at his first luridly sputtered sentence his wife shooed the children

out of the room in scandalized haste. But from the cottage's farthest end she could hear her spouse's light voice still raised to shrill falsetto. He seemed to be in earnest converse with his Maker, and the absence of his wife and children from the room lent luster and scope to his vocabulary.

Outside, the night was settling down bitterly chill. A drifting snow was sifting over the frozen earth. The winter's worst cold spell was beginning. But in the firelit kitchen a hope-blasted and swindled man was gripped by a boiling rage that all the frigid outer world could not have cooled.

Presently, through his sputtering soliloquy, Mackellar found time and justice to note that Lochinvar Bobby was still shaking with the cold of his long wagon ride through the snow from the station. And sullenly the man went out to the refrigerator in the back areaway for milk to warm for the sufferer.

He left the door open behind him. Into the kitchen seeped the deadly chill of night. It struck the miserable Bobby and roused him from the apathy of fright into which his advent to the bright room had immersed him.

The fright remained, but the impotence to move was gone. Fear had been born in his cringing soul, from the harsh treatment meted out to

him in the place of his birth by kennel men who scoffed at his worthlessness. Fear had increased fifty fold by his long and clangorous journey across half the continent. Now, fear came to a climax.

He had cowered in helpless terror before these strangers, here in the closed room. He had sensed their hostility. But now for an instant the strangers had left him. Yes, and the back door was standing ajar—the door to possible escape from the unknown dangers which beset him on all sides.

Tucking his ratlike tail between his cow-hocks, Bobby put down his head and bolted. Through the doorway he scurried, dodging behind the legs of Jamie Mackellar as he fled through the refrigerator-blocked areaway. Jamie heard the scrambling footfalls, and turned in time to make a belated grab for the fleeing dog.

He missed Bobby by an inch; and the man's gesture seemed to the pup a new menace. Thus had Roke and the other kennel men struck at him in early days; or had seized him by tail or hind leg as he fled in terror from their beatings.

Out into the unfenced yard galloped the panic-driven Bobby. And through the pitch blackness Mackellar stumbled in utterly futile pursuit. The sound of Jamie's following feet lent new speed to the cowed youngster. Instead of stopping, after

a few moments, he galloped on, with his ridiculous wavering and sidewise gait.

Mackellar lived on the outskirts of the suburb, which, in turn, was on the outskirts of the city. By chance or by instinct Bobby struck ahead for the rocky ridge which divided denser civilization from the uncleared wilderness and the patches of farm country to the north. Nor did the puppy cease to run until he had topped, puffingly, the ridge's summit. There he came to a shambling halt and peered fearfully around him.

On the ridge-crest, the wind was blowing with razor sharpness. It cut like a billion waxed whip-lashes, through the sparse coat and against the sagging ribs of the pup. It drove the snow needles into his watering eyes, and it stung the blown-back insides of his sensitive ears. He cowered under its pitiless might, as under a thrashing; and again he began to whimper and to sob.

Below him, from the direction whence he had wormed his slippery way up the ridge, lay the squalidly flat bit of plain with its sprinkle of mean houses; behind it, the straggling suburb whence he had escaped; and behind that, the far-reaching tangle of glare and blackness which was Midwestburg, with miles of lurid light reflection on the low-hanging clouds.

Turning, the puppy looked down the farther slope of his ridge to the rolling miles of forest

and clearing, with wide-scattered farmsteads and cottages. The wilds seemed less actively and noisily terrifying than the glare and muffled roar of the city behind him. And, as anything was better than to cower freezing there in the wind's full path, Bobby slunk down the ridge's northern flank and toward the naked black woodlands beyond its base.

The rock edges and the ice cut his uncalloused splay feet. Even out of the wind, the chill gnawed through coat and skin. The world was a miserable place to do one's living in. Moreover, Bobby had not eaten in more than twenty-four hours; although a pup of his age is supposed to be fed not less than four times a day.

The rock-strewn ridge having been passed, the going became easier. Here, on the more level ground, a snow carpet made it softer, if colder. No longer running, but at a loose-jointed wolf trot, Bobby entered the woods. A quarter mile farther on, he stopped again; at sight of something which loomed up at a height of perhaps three feet above the half-acre of cleared ground about it.

He had strayed into the once-popular Blake's Woods Picnic Grove, and the thing which arrested his sick glance was the dancing platform which had been erected at the grove's painfully geometrical center.

Years agone, Blake's Woods had been a favorite outing ground for Midwestburg's workers. The coming of the interurban trolley, which brought Boone Lake Beach within half an hour of the city, had turned these woods into a dead loss as far as local pleasure seekers were concerned. The benches had been split up or stolen or had rotted. The trim central patch of greensward had been left to grow successive unmown harvests of ragweed.

The dancing platform, with its once-smooth floor and the bright-painted lattice which ran around its base, was sharing the fate of the rest of the grove. The floor was sunken and holey. The laths of the lattice had fallen away in one or two places, and everywhere they had been washed free of their former gay paint.

Bobby's aimless course took him past one end of the platform, as soon as he discovered it was harmless and deserted. A furtive sidelong glance, midway of the latticed stretch, showed him a weed-masked hole some two feet square, where the laths had been ripped away or had been kicked in. The sight awoke vague submemories, centuries old, in the artificially reared pup. Thus had his wolf forbears seen, and explored for den purposes, gaps between rocks or under windfalls. Bobby, moving with scared caution, crept up to

the opening, sniffed its musty interior; and, step by step, ventured in under the platform.

Here it was still bitter cold; yet it was sensibly warmer than in the open. And, year after year, dead leaves had been wind-drifted through the gap. Riffles of them lay ankle deep near the entrance. Down into the thickest of the riffles the wretched puppy wiggled his shivering way. There he lay, still shaking, but gaining what scant comfort he might from the warmth of the leaves beneath and around him.

Presently from sheer nervous fatigue he snoozed.

It was past midnight when Bobby awoke. He was awakened less by cold than by ravening hunger. His was not the normal increase of appetite that had come upon him at such times as the Lochinvar kennel men had been an hour or so late with his dinner. This was the first phase of Famine.

Fear and discomfort had robbed him of hunger throughout the train journey. But now he was safe away from the strangers who had seemed to menace his every move; and he had had a few hours of sleep to knit his frayed nerves. He was more than hungry. He was famished. All his nature cried out for food.

Now, never in his brief life had Lochinvar Bobby found his own meals. Never had he so

much as caught a mouse or rifled a garbage pail. In sanitary man-made kennel run and hutch had he passed all his time. Not his had been the human companionship which sharpens a collie's brain as much as does stark need. And he had no experience of food, save that which had been served him in a tin dish. He did not know that food grows in any other form or place.

But here was no tin dish heaped with scientifically balanced, if uninspired, rations. Here was no manner of food at all. Bobby nosed about among the dead leaves and the mold of his new-found den. Nothing was there which his sense of smell recognized as edible. And goaded by the scourge of hunger he ventured out again into the night. The wind had dropped. But the cold had only intensified; and a light snow was still sifting down.

Bobby stood and sniffed. Far off, his sensitive nostrils told him, was human habitation. Presumably that meant food was there, too. Humans and food, in Bobby's experience, always went together. The pup followed the command of his scent and trotted dubiously toward the distant man-reek.

In another quarter-hour the starving pup was sniffing about the locked kitchen door of a farmhouse. Within, he could smell milk and meat and bread. But that was all the good it did him.

Timidly he skirted the house for ingress. Almost had he completed the round when a stronger odor smote his senses. It was a smell which, of old he would have disregarded. But, with the primal impulse of famine, other atavistic traits were stirring in the back of his necessity-sharpened brain.

This new scent was not of prepared food, but of hot and living prey. Bobby paused by the unlatched door of the farm chicken coop. Tentatively he scratched at the whitewashed panel. Under the pressure the door swung inward. Out gushed a pleasant warmth and a monstrously augmented repetition of the whiff which had drawn him to the henhouse.

Just above him, well within reach, perched fifteen or twenty feathery balls of varicolored fluff. And famine did the rest.

Acting on some impulse wholly beyond his ken, Bobby sprang aloft and drove his white milk teeth deep into the breast of a Plymouth Rock hen.

Instantly, his ears were assailed by a most ungodly racket. The quiet hencoop was hideous with eldritch squawks and was alive with feathers. All Bobby's natural fear urged him to drop this flapping and squawking hen and to run for his life.

But something infinitely more potent than fear had taken hold upon him. Through his fright

surged a sensation of mad rapture. He had set teeth in live prey. Blood was hot in his nostrils. Quivering flesh was twisting and struggling between his tense jaws. For the moment he was a primitive forest beast.

Still gripping his noisy five-pound burden, he galloped out of the hencoop and across the barnyard; heading instinctively for the lair in which he had found a soft bed and safety from human intruders. As he fled, he heard a man's bellowing voice. A light showed in an upper window of the house. Bobby ran the faster.

The hen was heavy, for so spindling a killer. But Bobby's overshot jaws held firm. He dared not pause to eat his kill, until he should be safe away from the shouting man.

Stumbling into his platform den, half dead with hunger and fatigue, the dog sought his bed of leaves. And there he feasted, rather than ate. For never before had he known such a meal. And when the last edible morsel of it was gorged, he snuggled happily down in his nest and slept.

Poultry bones are the worst and most dangerous fare for any domesticated dog. Their slivers tear murderously at throat and stomach and intestines; and have claimed their slain victims by the hundred. Yet, since the beginning of time, wild animals, as foxes and wolves, have fed with impunity on such bones. No naturalist knows

just why. And for some reason Bobby was no more the worse for his orgy of crunched chicken-bones than a coyote would have been.

He awoke, late in the morning. Some newborn sense, in addition to his normal fear, warned him to stay in his den throughout the daylight hours. And he did so; sleeping part of the time and part of the time nosing about amid the flurry of feathers in vain search for some overlooked bone or fragment of meat.

Dusk and hunger drove him forth again. And, as before, he sought the farmstead which had furnished him with so delicious a meal. But as he drew near, the sound of voices from indoors and the passing of an occasional silhouette across the bright window shades of the kitchen warned him of danger.

When, as the kitchen light was blown out, he ventured to the chicken coop he found the door too fast-barred to yield to his hardest scratch. Miserably hungry and disappointed he slunk away.

Three farms did Bobby visit that night before he found another with an unlatched henhouse door. There the tragedy of the preceding evening was repeated. Lugging an eight-pound Dominick rooster, Bobby made scramblingly for his mile-distant lair. Behind him again raged sound and fury. The eight-pound bird with its dang-

ling legs and tail feathers kept tripping up the fleeing dog; until, acting again on instinct, Bobby slung the swaying body over his shoulder, fox-fashion, and thus made his way with less discomfort.

By the third night the collie had taken another long step in his journey backward to the wild. When a dog kills a chicken every one within a half mile is likely to be drawn by the sound. When a fox or wolf or coyote kills a chicken, the deed is done in dexterous silence; with no squawks or flurry of feathers to tell the story. Nature teaches the killer this secret. And Nature taught it to Bobby; as she has taught it to other gone-wild dogs.

As a result, his depredations, thereafter, left no uproar behind them. Also, he learned presently the vulpine art of hoarding;—in other words, when safety permitted, to stay on the ground until he had not only slain but eaten one chicken, and then to carry another bird back to his lair for future use. It cut down the peril of overmany trips to neighboring coops.

In time, he learned to rely less and less on the close-guarded chickens in the vicinity of his den, and to quarter the farm country for a radius of ten or more miles in search of food. The same queer new instinct taught him infinite craft

in keeping away from humans and in covering his tracks.

He was doing no more than are thousands of foxes throughout the world. There was no miracle in his new-found deftness as a forager. Nature was merely telling her ancient and simple secrets to a wise little brain no longer too clogged by association with mankind to learn them.

There was a profitable side line to Bobby's chicken hunts. The wilder woods, back of Midwestburg, abounded in rabbits for such as had the wit to find them. And Bobby acquired the wit.

Incredibly soon, he learned the wolf's art of tracking a cottontail and of stalking the prey until such moment as a lightning dash and a blood-streaked swirl in the snow marked the end of the chase. Squirrels, too, and an occasional unwary partridge or smaller bird, were added to the collie's menu. And more than once, as he grew stronger, Bobby lugged homeward over his shoulder a twenty-pound lamb from some distant sheepfold.

Nature had played a vilely cruel trick on Lochinvar Bobby by bringing him into the world as the puny and defective runt of a royal litter. She had threatened his life by casting him loose in the winter woods. But at that point Nature seemed to repent of her unkindness to the poor helpless atom of colliehood. For she taught him the clos-

est-guarded secrets of her awful Live-On-One-Another ritual.

As winter grew soggy at the far approach of spring, Bobby found less and less trouble in making a nightly run of thirty miles in search of meals or in carrying back to his lair the heaviest of burdens.

Feasting on raw meat—and plenty of it—living in the open, with the icy cold for his bedfellow, he was taking one of the only two courses left to those who must forage or die. Readily enough he might have dwindled and starved. The chill weather might have snuffed out his gangling life. Instead, the cold and the exposure, and the needful exercise, and the life according to forest nature, and the rich supply of meat that was his for the catching—all these had worked wonders on the spindling runt.

His narrow chest had filled out, from much lung work. His shoulders, from the same cause and from incessant night running, had taken on a splendid breadth. His gawkily shambling body grew rapidly. The overshot puppy jaw was leveling. And as his frame grew it shaped itself along lines of powerful grace, such as Nature gives to the leopard and to the stag. Incessant exposure to the cold had changed his sparse covering of hair to a coat whose thickness and length and texture would have been the wonder of the dog-show

world. In brief, his mode of life was achieving for him what all the kennel experts and vets unhung could not have accomplished.

It had been a case of kill or cure. Bobby was cured.

After the departure of the snows and the zero nights, and before the leafage made secret progress safe through forest and meadow, Bobby knew a period of leanness. True, he foraged as before, but he did it at far greater risk and with less certainty of results.

For—he could not guess why—the countryside was infested nowadays with armed men; men who carried rifle or shot-gun and who not only scoured hill and valley by daylight but lurked outside chicken coops and sheepfolds by night.

Of course, by day Bobby could avoid them—and he did—by lying close in his den. And at night his amazingly keen sense of smell enabled him to skirt them, out of gun-shot range, as they waited at barn door or at fold gate. But such necessity for caution played havoc with his chances for easily acquired food. And for the most part he had to fall back on rabbit-catching or to traveling far afield. This, until the thickening of foliage made his hunting excursions safer from detection by human eye.

There was sufficient reason for all this patroling of the district. During the past few months

word had seeped through the farm country that a wolf was at large in the long-wolfless region; and that he was slaughtering all manner of live stock, from pullets to newborn calves.

No dog, it was argued, could be the killer. For no known dog could slay so silently and cover his tracks with such consummate skill. Nor could a fox carry away a lamb of double its own weight. The marauder must be a wolf. And old-timers raked up yarns of the superhumanly clever exploits of lone wolves, in the days when populous Midwestburg was a trading post.

The county Grange took up the matter and offered a bounty of fifty dollars for the wolf's scalp and ears. It was a slack time on the farms —the period between wood-cutting and early planting. It was a slack time in Midwestburg, too; several mills having shut down for a couple of months.

Thus, farmers and operatives amused themselves by making a try for the fifty dollars and for the honor of potting the super-wolf. It was pleasant if profitless sport for the hunters. But it cut down Bobby's rations; until farm work and reopening mills called off the quest. Then life went on as before; after a buckshot graze on the hip had taught the collie to beware of spring guns and to know their scent.

So the fat summer drowsed along. And so

autumn brought again to the northern air the tang which started afresh the splendid luxuriance of the tawny coat which Bobby had shed during the first weeks of spring.

Late in December the dog had a narrow escape from death. A farmer, furious at the demise of his best Jersey calf, went gunning afresh for the mysterious wolf. With him he took along a German police dog—this being before the days when that breed was de-Germanized into the new title of "shepherd dog." He had borrowed the police dog for the hunt, lured by its master's tales of his pet's invincible ferocity.

Man and dog had searched the woods in vain all day, some five miles to north of Bobby's cave. At early dusk they were heading homeward through a rock gulch.

The wind was setting strong from the north. Midway through the gulch the police dog halted, back abristle, growling far down in his throat. The man looked up.

As he did so, Bobby topped the cliff which formed the gulch's northerly side. The collie was on his way to a farm in the valley beyond, which he had not visited for so long a time that its occupants might reasonably be supposed to have relaxed some of their unneighborly vigilance. The wind from the north kept him from smelling or

hearing the two in the gulley a hundred feet to south of him.

Yet, reaching the summit, Bobby paused; his wonted caution bidding him search the lower grounds for sign of danger, before traveling farther by fading daylight in such an exposed position.

It was then that the farmer saw him clearly, for the best part of two seconds, silhouetted against the dying sunset. The man knew little enough of collies, and less of wolves. And his mental vision was set for a wolf. Thus, to the best of his belief, a wolf was what he saw. But he saw also something he had not expected to see.

The last rays of the sun glinted on a bit of metal that swung beneath Bobby's shaggy throat; metal that had been worn bright by constant friction with the dog's ruff.

Thanks to the twist of wire which had been fastened into his hair, Bobby had not slipped the leathern collar wherewith Frayne had equipped him. And later his swellingly muscular neck had been large enough to hold it on. From its ring the old license tag still dangled.

Up went the farmer's gun. He fired both barrels. As he pressed the two triggers at once, the police dog made a rush for the collie. The farmer chanced to be just in front of his canine com-

panion. The police dog sought a short cut, to reach his foe, by diving between the marksman's slightly spread legs. The two gun barrels were fired straight upward into the sky; and the tripped-up hunter sat down with extreme suddenness on a pointed jut of rock.

By the time he could focus his maddened gaze on the cliff-top again, Bobby had vanished. The police dog was charging over the summit at express-train speed. The farmer shook an impotent fist after the disappearing spoiler of his aim.

"I hope he licks the life out of you if you ever catch up with him, you bunglin' fool!" he bellowed.

His wish came true. Next day, in a hollow, a mile farther on, the body of the police dog was found, a score of slashes on his grayish hide and one through his jugular. No police dog ever lived that could catch up with a galloping collie who did not want to be caught. Bobby had varied a career of profit with a moment or two of real pleasure.

Two day later, in the Midwestburg *Herald,* Jamie Mackellar read the account of this fragmentary drama. He scanned it with no deep interest. Tales of the wolf had grown stale to *Herald* readers. But suddenly his attention focused itself on the line:

"Mr. Gierson declares that a small disk of metal was suspended from the throat of the brute."

Jamie laid down the paper and went into executive session with his own inner consciousness. A disk of metal, suspended from the throat of an animal, means but one thing: It is a license tag. Never has such a tag been fastened to a wolf.

Back into Mackellar's memory came the picture of a poor shivering waif from whose meager and almost naked throat hung a huge collar; a collar affixed by wire which was wound into such sparse strands of hair as could be made to support it.

On the morning after the next snowfall, Jamie took a day off. Carrying only a collar and chain and a muzzle, he fared forth into the woods. All day he hunted. He found nothing.

A week later came another snowfall in the night. Next morning Mackellar set forth again; this time letting his little son Donald come along. He had told his family the far-fetched suspicion that had dawned upon him, and Donald had clamored to join the hunt.

On his first search, Jamie had quartered the country to west of the ridge. To-day he climbed the rocks and made his way into the rolling land below. Skirting Blake's Woods, he was moving on toward the farms when, in the fresh snow, he came upon the tracks he sought. For an hour he followed them. Apparently they led nowhere. At

least, they doubled twice upon themselves and then vanished on a long outcrop of snowless rock which stretched back into Blake's Woods.

Tiring of this fruitless way of spending the morning, Donald strayed from his father. Into the woods he wandered. And presently he sighted the dancing platform amid its tangle of dead weeds. Running over to it, the boy climbed thereon. Then, striking an attitude, he began to harangue an invisible audience, from the platform edge; after the manner of a cart-tail political orator he had observed with emulous delight.

"My friends!" he shrilled, from memory, "Our anc'st'rs fit fer the lib'ty we enjoy! Are we goin' to——? *Ouch!* Hey, Daddy!"

One rhetorically stamping little foot had smashed through the rotten boarding. Nor could Donald draw it out. At the yell of fright, Jamie came running. But, a few yards from his son, Mackellar slid to a stop. His eyes were fixed on an opening just below the boy's imprisoned foot; an opening from which the passage of Donald's advancing body had cleared aside some of the tangled weeds. From the tip of a ragged lath, at the edge of this aperture, fluttered a tuft of tawny hair.

Pulling Donald free, Mackellar got down on all fours and peeped into the space beneath the platform. For a few seconds he could see nothing.

Then, as his eyes accustomed themselves to the dimness, he descried two greenish points of light turned toward him from the farthest corner of the lair.

"Bobby?" called the man doubtfully.

The cornered dog heard the name. It roused vague half memories. The memories were not pleasant; though the voice had in it a friendliness that stirred the collie strangely.

Bobby crouched the closer to earth and his lips writhed back from murderous white teeth. The man called again; in the same friendly, coaxing voice. Then he began to crawl forward a foot or so. Behind him the excited boy was blocking the only way out of the den.

The Lochinvar Bobby of ten months ago would have cowered whimperingly in his corner, waiting for capture. He might even have pleaded for mercy by rolling over on his back.

The Lochinvar Bobby of to-day was quite another creature. He laid out his plan of campaign, and then in the wink of an eye he carried it into effect.

With a rabid snarl he charged the advancing man. As Jamie braced himself to fend off the ravening jaws, the dog veered sharply to one side and dashed for the opening. Instinct told him the boy would be easier to break past than the man.

But it was not Jamie Mackellar's first experience with fighting or playing dogs. As Bobby veered, Jamie slewed his own prostrate body to the same side and made a grab for the fast-flying collie. His fingers closed and tightened around Bobby's left hind leg, just below the hock.

With a snarl, Bobby wheeled and drove his jaws at the captor's wrist; in a slash which might well have severed an artery. But, expecting just such a move, Jamie was ready with his free hand. Its fingers buried themselves in the avalanche of fur to one side of Bobby's throat. The slashing eye-teeth barely grazed the pinioning wrist. And Bobby thrashed furiously from side to side, to free himself and to rend his enemy.

Mackellar's expert hands found grips to either side of the whirling jaws, and he held on. Bit by bit, bracing himself with all his wiry strength, he backed out; dragging the frantic beast behind him.

Five minutes later, at the expense of a few half-averted bites, he had the muzzle tight-bound in place and was leading the exhausted and foaming collie toward Midwestburg. Bobby held back, he flung himself against the chain, he fought with futile madness against the gentle skill of his master.

Then shuddering all over he gave up the fight.

Head and tail adroop, he suffered himself to be led to prison.

"It's Lochinvar Bobby, all right!" the wondering Jamie was saying to his son in intervals of lavishing kindly talk and pats on the luckless dog. "The collar and tag prove that. But if it wasn't for them, I'd swear it couldn't be the same. It's—it's enough to take a body's breath away, Donald! I've followed the dog game from the time I was born, but I never set eyes on such a collie in all my days. Just run your hand through that coat! Was there ever another like it? And did you ever see such bone and head? He's—Lord, to think how he looked when that Frayne crook sawed him off on me! It's a miracle he lived through the first winter. I never heard of but one other case like it. And that happened up in Toronto, if I remember right.

"Now, listen, sonny: I'm not honing to be sued for damages by every farmer in the county. So let 'em keep on looking for their wolf. This is a dog I bought last year. He's been away in the country till now. That's the truth. And the rest is nobody's business. But—but if it keeps me speiring for a week, to figger it out, I'm going to hit on some way to let Mr. Lucius Frayne, Esquire, see he hasn't stung me so hard as he thought he did!"

For two days Bobby refused to eat or drink.

HEALDSBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY

In the stout inclosure built for him in Mackellar's back yard he stood, head and tail adroop, every now and then shivering as if with ague. Then, little by little, Jamie's skilled attentions did their work. The wondrous lure of human fellowship, the joy of cooked food, and the sense of security against harm, and, above all, a collie's ancestral love for the one man he chooses for his god—these wrought their work.

In less than a fortnight Bobby was once more a collie. The spirit of the wild beast had departed from him; and he took his rightful place as the chum of the soft-voiced little Scot he was learning to worship. Yes, and he was happy,—happier than ever before;—happy with a new and strangely sweet contentment. He had come into a collie's eternal heritage.

The Westminster Kennel Club's annual dog show at Madison Square Garden, in New York, is the foremost canine classic of America and, in late years, of the whole world.

A month before that year's Westminster Show, Lucius Frayne received a letter which made the wontedly saturnine sportsman laugh till the tears spattered down his nose. The joke was too good to keep to himself. So he shouted for Roke, and bade the kennel man share the fun of it with him.

He read aloud, cacklingly, to the listening Roke:

Mr. Lucius Frayne,
My dear Sir:

Last year, out to the Midwestburg show, here, you sold me a fine puppy of your Ch. Lochinvar King. And as soon as I could raise the price you sent him on here to me. I would of written to you when I got him, to thank you and to say how pleased I was with him and how all my friends praised him. But I figured you're a busy man and you haven't got any waste time to spend in reading letters about how good your dogs are. Because you know it already. And so I didn't write to you. But I am writing to you now. Because this is business.

You know what a grand pup Bobby was when you sent him to me? Well to my way of thinking he has developed even better than he gave promise to. And some of my friends say the same. To my way of thinking he is the grandest collie in North America or anywhere else to-day. He is sure one grand dog. He turned out every bit as good as you said he would. He's better now than he was at five months.

I want to thank you for letting me have such a dog, Mr. Frayne. Just as you said, he is of Champion timber. Now this brings me to the business I spoke about.

Granther used to tell me how the gentry on the other side would bet with each other on their dogs at the shows. Six months ago my Aunt Marjorie died and she willed me nine hundred dollars

($900). It is in bank waiting for a good investment for it. Now here is an investment that seems to me a mighty safe one. Me knowing Bobby as I do. A fine sporting investment. And I hope it may please you as well. I am entering Bobby for Westminster. I read in *Dog News* that you are expecting to enter Champion Lochinvar King there, with others of your string. So here is my proposition.

I propose you enter King for "Open, Sable-and-White" and "Open, Any Color," these being the only regular classes a sable champion is eligible for. I will enter Bobby in the same classes, instead of "Novice" as I was going to. And I will wager you six hundred dollars ($600) even, that the judge will place Bobby above King. I am making this offer knowing how fine King is but thinking my dog is even better. For Bobby has really improved since a pup. My wife thinks so too.

If this offer pleases you will you deposit a certified check of six hundred dollars ($600) with the editor of *Dog News?* He is a square man as every one knows and he will see fair play. He has promised me he will hold the stakes. I am ready to deposit my certified check for six hundred dollars ($600) at once. I would like to bet the whole nine hundred dollars ($900). Knowing it a safe investment. Knowing Bobby like I do. But my wife doesn't want me to bet it at all and so we are compromising on six hundred dollars ($600).

Please let me hear from you on this, Mr. Frayne. And I thank you again for how you

treated me as regards Bobby. I hope to repay you at Westminster by letting you see him for yourself.

Your ob't servant,
James A. Mackellar.

Yes, it was a long letter. Yet Frayne skipped no word of it. And Roke listened, as to heavenly music.

"Talk about Lochinvar luck!" chortled Frayne as he finished. "The worst pup we ever bred; and we sold him for one-fifty! And now he is due to fetch us another six hundred, in dividends. He——"

"You're going to cover his bet?" queried Roke. "Good! I was afraid maybe you'd feel kind of sorry for the poor cuss, and——"

"Unless I break both wrists, in the next hour," announced Frayne, "that certified check will start for the *Dog News* office by noon. It's the same old wheeze: A dub has picked up a smattering of dog talk; he thinks he knows it all. He buys a bum pup with a thundering pedigree. The pedigree makes him think the pup is a humdinger. He brags about it to his folks. They think anything that costs so much must be the best ever, no matter how it looks. And he gets to believing he's got a world beater. Then——"

"But, boss," put in Roke with happy unction, "just shut your eyes and try to remember how

that poor mutt looked! And the boob says he's 'even better than he gave promise to be.' Do you get that? Yet you hear a lot about Scotchmen being shrewd! Gee, but I wish you'd let me have a slice of that $600 bet! I'd——"

"No," said Frayne judicially. "That's my own meat. It was caught in my trap. But I tell you what you can do: Wait till I send my check and till it's covered, and then write to Mackellar and ask him if he's willing to bet another $150, on the side, with you. From the way he sounds, you ought to have it easy in getting him to make the side bet. He needn't tell his wife. Try it anyhow; if you like."

Roke tried it. And, after ridiculously small objection on Jamie's part, the side bet was recorded and its checks were posted with the editor of *Dog News*. Once more Lucius Frayne and his faithful kennel man shook hands in perfect happiness.

To the topmost steel rafters, where the gray February shadows hung, old Madison Square Garden echoed and reverberated with the multi-keyed barks of some two thousand dogs. The four-day show had been opened at ten o'clock of a slushy Wednesday morning. And as usual the collies were to be judged on the first day.

Promptly at eleven o'clock the clean-cut collie

judge followed his steward into the ring. The leather-lunged runner passed down the double ranks of collie benches, bawling the numbers for the Male Puppy Class.

The judge had a reputation for quickness, as well as for accuracy and honesty. The Open classes, for male dogs, were certain to come up for verdict within an hour, at most.

Seven benches had been thrown into one, for the Frayne dogs. At its back ran a strip of red silk, lettered in silver: "LOCHINVAR COLLIE KENNELS." Seven high-quality dogs lay or sat in this space de luxe. In the center—his name on a bronze plate above his head—reclined Lochinvar King.

In full majesty of conscious perfection he lay there; magnificent as a Numidian lion, the target for all eyes. Conditioned and groomed to the minute, he stood out from his high-class kennelmates like a swan among cygnets.

Frayne, more than once in the show's first hour or so, left his much-admired benches; for a glance at a near-by unoccupied space, numbered 568. Here, according to the catalogue, should be benched Lochinvar Bobby.

But Bobby was nowhere to be seen.

Congratulating himself on his own craft in having inserted a forfeit clause in the bet agree-

ment, Frayne was none the less disappointed that the fifth-rate mutt had not shown up.

He longed for a chance to hear the titter of the railbirds; when the out-at-elbow, gangling, semi-hairless little nondescript should shamble into the ring. Bobby's presence would add zest to his own ofttold tale of the wager.

According to American Kennel Club rules, a dog must be on its bench from the moment the exhibition opens until the close, excepting only when it is in the ring or at stated exercise periods. That rule, until recently, has been most flagrantly disregarded by many exhibitors. In view of this, Frayne made a trip to the exercise room and then through the dim-lit stalls under the main floor.

As he came back from a fruitless search for Bobby or for Mackellar, he passed the collie ring. "Limit; Dogs," was chalked on the blackboard. Two classes more—"Open, Merle," and "Open, Tricolor"—and then King must enter the ring for "Open, Sable." Frayne hurried to the Lochinvar benches, where Roke and another kennel man were fast at work putting finishing touches to King's toilet.

The great dog was on his feet, tense and eager for the coming clash. Close behind the unseeing Roke, and studying King with grave admiration, stood Jamie Mackellar.

"Hello, there!" boomed Frayne with loud cordiality, bearing down upon the little man. "Get cold feet? I see your dog's absent. Remember, you forfeit by absence."

"Yes, sir," said Jamie with meekness, taking off his hat to the renowned sportsman, and too confused in fumbling with its wabbly brim to see the hand which Frayne held out to him. "Yes, sir. I remember the forfeit clause, sir. I'm not forfeiting. Bobby is here."

"Here? Where? I looked all over the——"

"I hired one of the cubby-hole rooms upstairs, sir; to keep him in, nights, while he's here. And I haven't brought him down to his bench yet. You see, he—he ain't seen many strangers. And you'll remember, maybe, that he used to be just a wee peckle shy. So I'm keeping him there till it is time to show him. My boy, Donald, is up, now, getting him ready. They'll be down presently, sir. I think you'll be real pleased with how Bobby looks."

"I'm counting on a heap of pleasure," was Frayne's cryptic reply, as he turned away to mask a grin of utter joy.

Five gray dogs were coming down the aisle to their benches. The Merle Class had been judged and the Tricolors were in the ring. There were but four of these.

In another handful of minutes the "Open,

Sable" Class was called. It was the strongest class of the day. It contained no less than three champions; in addition to four less famous dogs, like Bobby;—seven entries in all.

Six of these dogs were marched into the ring. The judge looked at the steward, for the "all-here" signal. As he did so, the seventh entrant made his way past the gate crowd and was piloted into the ring by a small and cheaply clad man.

While the attendant was slipping the number board on Mackellar's arm, Lucius Frayne's eyes fell upon Lochinvar Bobby. So did those of the impatient judge and of ninety out of every hundred of the railbirds.

Through the close-packed ranks of onlookers ran a queer little wordless mutter—the most instinctive and therefore the highest praise that can be accorded.

Alertly calm of nerve, heedless of his surroundings so long as his worshiped god was crooning reassurances to him, Bobby stood at Mackellar's side.

His incredible coat was burnished like old bronze. His head was calmly erect, his mighty frame steady. His eyes, with true eagle look, surveyed the staring throng.

Never before, in all the Westminster Club's forty-odd shows, had such a collie been led into

the ring. Eugenic breeding, wise rationing and tireless human care had gone to the perfecting of other dogs. But Mother Nature herself had made Lochinvar Bobby what he was. She had fed him bountifully upon the all-strengthening ration of the primal beast; and she had given him the exercise-born appetite to eat and profit by it. Her pitiless winter winds had combed and winnowed his coat as could no mortal hand, giving it thickness and length and richness beyond belief. And she had molded his growing young body into the peerless model of the Wild.

Then, because he had the loyal heart of a collie and not the incurable savagery of the wolf, she had awakened his soul and made him bask rapturously in the friendship of a true dog-man. The combination was unmatchable.

"Walk your dogs, please," ordered the judge, coming out of his momentary daze.

Before the end of the ring's first turn, he had motioned Frayne and Mackellar to take their dogs into one corner. He proceeded to study the five others; awarding to two of them the yellow third-prize ribbon and the white reserve, and then ordering the quintet from the ring. After which he beckoned Bobby and King to the judging block.

In the interim, Frayne had been staring goggle-eyed at the Midwestburg collie. He tried to

speak; but he could not. A hundred thoughts were racing dumbly through his bemused brain. He stood agape, foolish of face.

Jamie Mackellar was pleasantly talkative.

"A grand class, this," he confided to his voiceless comrade. "But, first crack, Judge Breese had the eye to single out our two as so much the best that he won't size 'em up with the others. How do you like Bobby, sir? Is he very bad? Don't you think, maybe, he's picked up, just a trifle, since you shipped him to me? He's no worse, anyhow, than he was then, is he?"

Frayne gobbled, wordlessly.

"This is the last time I'll show him, for a while, Mr. Frayne," continued Jamie, a rasping note coming into his timid voice. "The cash I'm due to collect from you and Mr. Roke will make enough, with the legacy and what I've saved, to start me in business with a truck of my own. Bobby and I are going into partnership. And we're going to clean up. Bobby is putting seven hundred and fifty dollars and to-day's cash prizes into the firm. He and I are getting out of the show-end of collie breeding, for a time. The more we see of some of you professionals, the better we like cesspools. If dogs weren't the grandest animals the good Lord ever put on earth, a few of the folks who exploit them would have killed the

log game long ago. It——. Judge Breese is beckoning for us!"

Side by side, the two glorious collies advanced o the judging block. Side by side, at their hand-ers' gestures, they mounted it. And again from he railbirds arose that queer wordless hum. Sire nd son, shoulder to shoulder, faced the judge.

And, for the first time in his unbroken career of conquest, Lochinvar King looked almost shabby; eside the wondrous young giant he had sired. iis every good point—and he had no others—was ettered by Bobby.

As a matter of form, Breese went over both logs with meticulous care; testing coat-texture, pring of ribs, action, soundness of bone, carriage, facial expression, and the myriad other details vhich go into the judging of a show dog. Long ie faced them, crouching low and staring into heir deep-set eyes; marking the set and carriage of the tulip ears; comparing point with point; as becomes a man who is about to give victory to an Unknown over a hitherto Invincible.

Then with a jerk of his head he summoned the teward with the judging book and ribbons. And, mid a spontaneous rattle of applause, Jamie Mackellar led his splendid dog to the far end of he ring, with one hand; while in the fingers of he other fluttered a strip of gold-lettered dark lue ribbon.

Back came both collies for the "Open, Any Color Class," and the verdict was repeated; as it was repeated in the supreme "Winners'" Class which followed. "Winners'" Class carried, with its rosette and cash specials, a guerdon of five points toward Bobby's championship.

Then followed the rich harvest of other cash specials in the collie division, including $25 for "Best of Breed," and for the next three days the even fatter gleanings from among the variety classes and unclassified specials. These last awards ranged from five dollars to twenty-five dollars apiece; apart from a valiseful of silver cups and like trophies which are more beautiful than pawnable.

On Saturday, Jamie Mackellar and Bobby took the midnight train for Midwestburg; richer by almost nine hundred dollars for their New York sojourn.

Rolling sweetly around in Jamie's memory was a brief talk he had had with Roke, an hour before the close of the show. Sent as emissary by Frayne, the kennel manager had offered Mackellar a flat two thousand dollars for the sensational young prize winner.

"We're not parting company, Bobby and I," Jamie had made civil answer. "Thanking you and your boss just as much. But tell Mr. Frayne if ever I breed a pup as good as Bobby was when he

came to me, he can have it for an even hundred and fifty. I wouldn't want such a fine chap to think I'm not just as clean a sportsman as what he is!"

CHAPTER II: SILVER MAGIC

THE cup's actual cash value was $3,400. Each of its temporary possessors was compelled, by the specialty club's rules, to put up a bond for that sum.

By the terms of Caius Q. Folger's will, the garishly gigantic and gigantically garish sterling silver trophy was to go permanently to the member of the Transcontinent Collie Club whose dog or series of dogs should thrice in succession win the award for Best Collie, in the club's annual show.

Now, on the face of it, that is an honor all-but impossible to attain. It may well be that, in the course of a decade or so, the same exhibitor can annex thrice the "special" for best collie. But, to do it three times in succession is quite another matter.

The showgoing career of the average dog is brief. A collie, good enough to win the Folger Trophy to-day, will not often continue good enough to win it two years hence. Competition is stiff. New dogs of high quality are forever flashing upon the show-horizon, to dispute the honors of the oldtimers.

Thus, though Caius Q. Folger had been in his quarter-million-dollar mausoleum for nearly a quarter-century, his massive prize-cup had never yet found permanent resting place. No winner had held it for more than two successive years. Few had possessed it for more than a single proud year. It was the gnawing ambition and the utter despair of every member of the collie fraternity, to own that elusive trophy.

Lochinvar King, mighty leader of Lucius Frayne's Lochinvar collie kennels, was twice in succession adjudged best collie at the Transcontinent Show. The hopes of Lucius Frayne and of his kennel-manager, Perry Roke, flared high.

Then, on the third year, a soft-spoken little Scot, a truckman, Jamie Mackellar by name, made the long train-trip from Midwestburg to the Transcontinent Show. He brought with him a huge young dark sable collie, Lochinvar Bobby by name;—Lochinvar King's splendid son, who recently had beaten his illustrious sire at the Westminster Kennel Club show.

Jamie chanced to read in *Field & Fancy* of the approaching Transcontinent Show, in the East; and of Frayne's hopes of gaining permanent possession of the coveted Folger Cup. Long and musingly Jamie Mackellar sat; the dog-journal still in his lap. Then, he wrote a letter. The

letter was an application for membership in the Transcontinent Collie Club.

Now, to apply for membership in almost any Specialty Club in dogdom is, practically always, the same thing as an election to that club. Membership-boosting is the eternal slogan. Few are the restrictions, so long as dues are paid. Within a week, Jamie received news of his election and a notification to pay his dues of $5.

A month later, he was on his way to the club's annual show.

"You see, Bobby, lad," he confided to his great young dog, as he groomed him for the ring, "Pride is one of the Seven Deadly Sins, Bobby. Maybe it's more than one of them, for all I ken. Aiblins it's two or three of them. And this Lucius Frayne person is all 'prim'd up with majestic pride,' like Marjorie Fleming would say. He's proud because King has won yon hantle of silver and curlycues, for two years running. Now, Bobby, lad, 'tis a good Christian's duty to stamp out sin. And that's why you and I have come from the West, traveling East. To rid Mr. Frayne of the Deadly Sin of Pride, Bobby. 'Tis grateful the poor dear man should be to us. Yet I misdoubt me if he will. He didn't seem to be what I'd rightly call a grateful man, Bobby, when we beat him at Westminster, last February. . . . Now give me 'tother forepaw, Bobby. You've

got those leg-feathers of yours all a muck of a tangle. Stand still, while I comb them out for you."

Jamie, as usual in collie matters, had guessed aright as to his chum's ability to win. Lochinvar Bobby went through his regular classes at the five-point Transcontinent show, straight to Winners. Then came the specials. King, being a champion, had been entered "for specials only." Not until the classic special for "Best in Show" did the two grand collies come together in competition. Then, after long and nerve-racking test and study, the judge handed the rosette for "Best in Show" to Jamie Mackellar.

There was a rattle of applause from the massed railbirds. For the verdict was just. Moreover, Lucius Frayne had succeeded in amassing a most incredible quota of unpopularity during his long show-ring career. And the story of his boomerang deal with Mackellar had become semi-public property.

Back to Midwestburg and to his truck fared Jamie. With him traveled the calmly triumphant Lochinvar Bobby. Bobby was vaguely aware he had done something to make his adored master very proud and happy. Wherefore, the big dog rejoiced. Which is the way of collies, the world over.

A month later, Jamie—having managed to

raise the needful $3,400 bond on his truck and his cottage—received by express an enormous and elaborately chased and glittering receptacle, inscribed in swirlingly etched letters: *"The Caius Q. Folger Memorial Cup."*

"Bobby, lad," sighed Jamie, in perfect bliss, as he turned the gleaming bauble over and over in his gnarled grasp, "Bobby, lad, I'm sure such a big-hearted sportsman as Mr. Frayne was tickled speechless to have to send us this heavenly cup. As glad he was, I'm thinking, as if he'd had to send us one of his legs or the both of his fine roomy ears, Bobby. Folks say he was clean daft over this cup, Bobby, boy. I'm glad he was 'clean,' about *one* thing. Now, then, it's up to you to win to two years longer, Bobby. And it's up to me to keep you in shape to do it."

If ever a dog was "kept in shape," that dog was Lochinvar Bobby. Mackellar took a delight in working over the shaggy bronze coat, with cloth and dandy-brush and palms; and in the diet and the long daily runs in woods and fields which kept the dog hard and lean and well. Bobby was the busy little Scot's one recreation, his one fad, his one chum. Jamie talked to him as to a fellow-man. And by reason of all this, the collie's brain and heart and soul had developed, even as had his beautiful body.

Because of past experience with Lucius Frayne

and Roke, Jamie proceeded to teach the dog a new accomplishment;—one easy to impart to any clever collie. Namely, to touch no food offered to him by any one except Jamie himself.

More than one high-quality dog has died, from no apparent cause, during or just after a show; or has been too ill to do himself justice in the ring. Jamie had heard about cases of the sort. He was resolved that Bobby's name should not be added to the wretched list. Wherefore the food-inhibition.

The second year's Transcontinent show gave Bobby his second tenure of the cup, and the remaining five points needful to make him a champion. This time, Jamie was further weighted, on his journey to the Show, by the necessity of carrying the gigantic cup with him, from Midwestburg. For, a new club rule, introduced by Frayne, demanded that the cup be on exhibition during each show. Thus, Jamie had the proud responsibility of making the round trip in its company.

On the eve of the third year's Transcontinent show, Mackellar was thrilled by a nervousness which approached panic.

He knew well that old Lochinvar King was no longer in show-shape; and that neither Frayne nor any other contender was likely to have a collie that could compare with Bobby. Jamie's

dog was still under four years old. He had lost no shade of his magnificent perfection.

Yet Jamie had much ado to keep his own teeth from chattering. In a more than quarter century, no collie or collie owner had succeeded in gaining permanent hold on the Folger Cup. Through the collie world had seeped the belief that the cup would never be won outright.

Thus, with the victory apparently within his reach, Jamie Mackellar was scared. Racial superstition clawed at him. The whole thing, thus far, had been too easy. Trouble was due.

He traveled to the city where the show was to be held, in hourly trepidation. The train was certain to be derailed. Or else a heavy trunk would topple over on Bobby; and kill or maim the beloved dog. Jamie spent his entire time in the baggage-car; watching over the comfortably snoozing collie, day and night.

Then, arrived in the city, he had a firm premonition that the taxicab would be run into and smashed, as it bore Bobby and himself and the bulky Folger Cup to the little hotel where he always stayed when attending a Transcontinent show.

Mackellar was mildly amazed to find himself safe in his hotel room, with the dog and the cup. But, nearly sixteen hours must pass before the opening of the show, next morning. And he pro-

ceeded to borrow new trouble by visualizing all the dire things which might well befall, in the meantime. Fire and earthquake were among the least dramatic of these.

He had supper in his room; thriftily consuming there the last of the relays of home lunches put up for him by his Yorkshire wife; and dishing up for Bobby a balanced ration made palatable by a pint of milk.

After eating, he put his suitcase and the kit-bag of Bobby's show-appurtenances and the enormous cup into the closet of his room. Then, locking the closet door, he pocketed the key; and fared forth as usual to give Bobby his evening walk, before going to bed.

Even in the most crowded of the city's streets, he did not bother to snap the leash on his collie. For the dog was as street-wise as any policeman. He would trot at Jamie's side or in front of him, along the pavement, until a crossing was reached. Then, invariably, Bobby would halt, and await his master's word to cross. Close to Mackellar he would move, until the haven of the farther sidewalk told him there was nothing more to be feared from motor cars.

Loftily, he strutted along; oblivious of the chirps of passersby and even ignoring the occasional advances of other dogs. For thus had Jamie trained him from the first days of their

association. A collie learns these and like useful lessons with bewildering ease, if he be sanely taught.

"Now, then, Bobby, lad," exhorted Jamie at last, "I'e plodded till the scare-devils are all tramped out of me; and till, belike, the pavements have got your poor feet too tender. It's back we'll be going, and to bed. And to-morrow, this time, we'll be on our way home to Mistress—us and yon grand silver cup. The cup'll be our own, by then, Bobby, lad. Not with a string tied to it. So we won't have to keep havering and worrying over it any more; or risking everything with a bond for all we've got. . . . Back to the hotel we go, Bobby. They tell me 'hotel' is a French word. I misdoubt me if it isn't the French for 'A fool and his money are soon parted.' Think of the big price we're paying for yon room, Bobby; and how we've been wasting cash all evening by staying out of it! It's spenders we are, Bobby, you and I;—spenders and wasters. Come on."

Once safe in the stuffy little room, Jamie poured a bowl of water for the collie to drink; and then proceeded to undress. From long habit of neatness he carried his outer clothes to the closet to hang them on their frames.

As he turned the knob of the closet door, he remembered the door was locked and that the key was in his trousers pocket. But, before he could

release his hold on the knob, to look for the key, the door opened at his pull.

Jamie stepped back, his forehead puckering. He knew he had locked the door. He was in no doubt whatever about that. He had locked it and then had tested it. Yet now, most evidently, it was unlocked. The thing did not make sense.

Dropping his armful of outer clothes, Mackellar dived feverishly into the closet. He hauled his suitcase into view. It was as he had left it; locked and heavy. Next came forth the bulky canvas cup-bag. That, too, was still tied at the neck and gratifyingly heavy.

The man laid down the two bundles on a chair, and stood puzzled.

Bobby, collie-like, felt that his master was worried. He crossed over to him and stood looking perplexedly up into Jamie's face. Gleaning no information from the frowning countenance, the dog stepped into the closet and sniffed appraisingly of its musty atmosphere. Then, his classic muzzle dropped earthward and he began to sniff at the floor. Thence, turning, he backed out of the closet and sniffed again.

Jamie knew his dog; and he trusted Bobby's powers of scent. Therefore, abstractedly, he followed the collie's leisurely motions in mild interest.

The dog had paused in front of the chair

whereon Mackellar had laid the suitcase and the cup-bag. He was running his muzzle over the latter, in a series of quick sniffs. Now, in order to reach an unexposed portion of the canvas, he gave the bag a slight shove with his nose.

The motion served to jar the bag from its uncertain perch on the corner of the chair. To the floor it tumbled, heavily.

"There, now!" chided Mackellar, as the dog continued to smell at the fallen bundle. "There, now, see what ye've done, Bobby, lad! Knocked over our grand sterling silver cup onto the floor, ye clumsy old Sawney; and most likely put a dent into it! Upset $3,400; no less! What'll those folks think of Jamie Mackellar, to-morrow, at the show, when they see the wonderful Folger Cup all dinged and dented? They'll say I——"

He broke off, with a gasp. As he talked, he had picked up the bag; and had untied it, in order to see whether or not the fall had really damaged the precious cup. Thrusting his hand, now, into the sack, he hauled forth no cup. In his bemused grasp, he held a crumpled hatbox.

The hatbox was fastened shut with a string. Breaking this, Mackellar beheld wads of newspaper carefully wrapped around handfuls of stones. It was a neat job; and it savored of skilled professionalism.

The man's jaw hung ajar. His head was in a

whirl. He could not think clearly. He could not think at all.

Vaguely, into his muddled senses presently seeped the realization that he had been robbed;—that the cup was gone;—that his $3,400 bond was forfeit; and that he had not $3,400 in the world.

The robbery had stripped him bare. It left him broke and in debt and in desperation. It spelt ruin; as well as his eternal disgrace in the eyes of the dogshow world.

"Bobby!" he groaned. "Bobby, lad, we're done for! We're—we're *dead!*"

Half to himself, half to the dog, he maundered on, dazedly:

"Everything we've got in the world, Bobby! *Everything!* And all those grand hopes of piling up cash and buying more trucks and hiring men and going into the wholesale end of the truck business and getting a bigger house and some day sending the bairns to college and all that! Well, we must be folding up them beautiful hopes of ours, Bobby, lad;—folding 'em up and laying them away; like they was the pants of some dear dead friend! And—and there's Mistress, Bobby! How'll I ever face her? Lord God, how'll I ever face Mistress?"

At the poignant agony in Mackellar's choking voice, the collie whimpered in keen sympathy. Uprearing himself he put his tiny white fore-

paws on Jamie's chest; seeking to lick the haggard face of his god.

The dog's stark eagerness brought Jamie back from his daze. That and the fact that Bobby's weight almost threw the wizened little Scot off his feet. The filmed blue eyes began to blaze; and the drooping jaw tightened.

"Bobby, lad!" cried Jamie, in a gust of righteous wrath. "Let's stop havering and *do* something! Yon was no sneak-thief. A sneak-thief wouldn't 'a' had this bandbox all ready, to put in the cup's place. He wouldn't 'a' known the bag had a cup in it. *Nobody* would have known, except some one in the show game—some one who knows I've got to take that cup to the show, tomorrow. He knew; and he knew where I always stop when I come here; and he found out what room I'd wrote for. He knew I'd be giving you an evening walk, Bobby," went on the little man in growing excitement. "He knew the coast would be clear. He's some one who knows our ways. That narrows it down a bit, Bobby, lad."

Walking back and forth, he began to mutter again, disjointedly; his brain racing. The dog, infected by his master's excitement, trotted nervously to and fro beside him, whining and trying to read Jamie's expression.

The man halted in his aimless ramble. Strid-

ing back to the closet door, he motioned Bobby to go in.

"You scented him before, Bobby, boy!" he harangued. "You scented his step there and then his hand on the bag. Get his scent again. *Find* him!"

Now the words, "Find him!" accompanied by that floorward gesture, were no novelty to Lochinvar Bobby. A hundred times, Jamie had pointed thus to the ground and bidden him trace Mistress or Donald or Elspeth or some neighbor who had passed by.

The collie's muzzle was busy in the closet's floor-dust, on the instant. And, a second later, Bobby was out of the closet and on his way to the room's outer door. Pausing there, he scratched imperiously at the panels, to get out.

Jamie had reached the door, himself; before he realized he was barefoot and in his underclothes. As a concession to modesty, he caught up his trousers and thrust his legs into them; yanking one suspender over his lean shoulder. Then he opened the door; and, with a hand gripping Bobby's ruff, started out.

The hour was late and the top corridor lights burned low. There was nobody in sight. The hotel was patronized by men of Jamie's general stamp. The top floor guests were either asleep or else had not yet come in.

Bobby's questing nostrils picked up at once the trail he sought. He gave notice of this discovery by a muffled bark which Jamie's sharp whisper of *"Quiet!"* silenced. Down the corridor he made his way, tugging at Jamie's restraining hold; the little Scot pattering avidly alongside.

The dog sensed his master's frantic eagerness and grief. Bobby yearned to voice his own sympathy by a thunder of barks that would have awakened the whole somnolent hotel. But Jamie's tense whisper of "Quiet!" was not to be disobeyed.

There was nothing at all complex to Bobby in this man-hunt which Mackellar had ordained. The scent of a human intruder had been as fresh and as discernible to the collie's trained nostrils, back yonder in the clothes closet, as would have been a smear of scarlet paint to the vision of man. Humans recognize by eye; dogs by nose.

The scent was less easy to follow, out here in the dim corridor where a hundred human feet had trodden, that day. But it offered no real difficulty. Besides, at every step, it was waxing fresher and stronger.

In his wilderness days, when his meals and his life itself hung on his powers of tracking, Bobby had followed far more involved trails than this; and had stuck to them for hours. Now, aided by his sympathetic excitement with Jamie's emotion,

some of the old thrill of the chase crept into the great dog's blood. He strained harder at the restraining hand and lunged forward on the trail.

All this for perhaps a hundred feet. Then came a sharp turn in the corridor, where a little cul-de-sac branched off at right angles from the hall. To either side of this alcove was the door of a room.

At the lefthand door, Bobby came to a halt. Before Jamie could restrain him, the dog had scratched sharply at the lower panel, in demand for admittance.

The trail stopped here. Through the cracks Bobby could catch the odor he was questing. The end of the hunt lay just behind that shut door. And Bobby was not minded to be kept waiting.

Again he scratched, looking up at Jamie in sharp appeal. These humans understood the mystery of shut doors. By some divine magic, they could open the cryptic portals. And Bobby waited impatiently, now, for Jamie to perform this every-day miracle.

But Jamie seemed in no hurry. The canny little Scot was casting his eye about the battlefield, like a good general. The righthand door showed a dead-black transom above it. But from over this other door, at which Bobby had scratched, shone a light. Yes, and from within the room, in response to the scratching, came a tread of ap-

proaching steps. Jamie's muscles tightened. He crouched as for a spring.

"Who's there?" demanded a cautious voice from behind the paneling.

Jamie gave no answer. Indeed, he held his breath, and forbore to move. He even checked the gesture wherewith he had started to restrain Bobby from that impatient scratching at the panel.

Into his fast-working brain had come an idea. If he should make reply, there was every chance against his gaining admittance. If the stolen cup was in the room with that cautious-voiced man, the latter was not likely to throw wide the door to any stranger.

The cautiously-spoken query had been in no voice Mackellar could recall. The tones were those of a man on his guard and tensely nervous. To waste time by running down to the hotel desk or by summoning the police, might well give the forewarned thief a chance to get away; or at the very least to toss the cup out of a window and then deny all knowledge of it.

Curiosity ever goes hand in hand with keen nervous apprehension. And, surely nothing could more excite curiosity than the noise of scratching toes at the panel of a hotel room door, at midnight. If the man inside the room knew anything of dogs—as seemed likely from the nature of his theft—the sound would be recogniz-

able at once. If he were a non-dogman, the sound would be eminently mysterious. In either event, there would be no hint of human origin to it.

Jamie stood stockstill. Again and again, Lochinvar Bobby scratched his imperious summons for admittance. Then, Jamie drew the dog a step backward. The scratching ceased. Dead silence followed. Twice the man in the room had repeated his question as to the intruder's identity. Each time there had been more of nervousness in the tone. Now, in the utter stillness, Mackellar could hear him breathing. Evidently the man's eye or ear was at the keyhole. But no sight or sound from the unlit alcove rewarded him.

"If he don't know dogs," thought Mackellar, "he's wondering what the blue blazes was the thing that scraped to get in. If he does know dogs—well, he's either muddling as to what any dog would be doing at his door, up here, this time of night; or else he's thinking Bobby has come all alone for the cup;—and he's cursing himself for a fool for thinking such a crazy thing. My feet are bare, and Bobby's are padded. He couldn't have heard us coming here. That first scratch made him jump. . . . We'll get action, soon."

For a full two minutes, in breathless silence, Mackellar crouched there; the wonderingly excited collie at his side. Then, he heard the stealthy grate of a key, turned all-but noiselessly

in the lock. Apparently, the thief was not able to restrain his scared curiosity for just one guarded peep into the dark hallway.

It was the instant for which Jamie had waited. He could visualize the scene on the far side of the door. He knew the turn of the key would be followed by the weight of the man's body against the door; to repel any chance enemy who might seek to force a way in. Then, the door would be opened on a crack; the opener's shoulder still ready to slam it shut.

Mackellar had foreseen it, in that endless two-minute wait. And he had laid his plans. There must be a moment's brief interval between the turning of the key and the applying of the man's shoulder to the panel.

Thus, at first sound of the grating key, Jamie braced his feet against the far wall of the alcove, and flung himself with all his wiry strength and meager weight at the door.

"Come, Bobby!" he whispered, as he sprang. *"Quiet!"*

At Mackellar's furious impact the door swung open; smiting full in the face the man who had been preparing to brace his shoulder against it. The crassly unexpected move had caught him off balance. The furious blow of the door-edge in his face sent him reeling backward. His foot caught in a rug. He tripped; and sat down hard.

"Say, for the love of Mike!" growled a slumbrous voice from beyond the transom of the opposite room. "Can't you boys quit rough-housing and let decent folks get to sleep?"

Jamie's own impetus shot him far into the room; the thrilled Lochinvar Bobby dashing in beside him. Mackellar's first move was to point to the half-risen man on the floor; and to whisper, fiercely:

"Watch him, Bobby, lad! *Watch* him!"

At the same time he was regaining his own imperiled balance; and softly shutting and locking the room door behind him.

Bobby, as ever, needed no second order from his god. Well did he know the stern difference between the commands, "Watch him!" and "Take him!" In his present excitement the collie would much have preferred the second mandate. Yet, with ferocious willingness, he obeyed the first.

Darting at the stranger, he crouched in front of him, teeth bared, hackles abristle, head sunk low in shaggy neck; every sinew aquiver for a leap at the foe's throat. Mackellar's warning of "Quiet!" alone choked back the murderous thunder-growls in his throat.

Even to a man standing firm on his feet and ready for attack, such an apparition would have been reasonably terrifying. But, the menace's victim was neither on his feet nor prepared.

Spurred by gnawing curiosity, the thief had turned his door-key. As by some jack-in-the-box magic, the door had banged violently against him and knocked him down. Before he could so much as rise to his knees, this furry giant of a brute was ravening at him. Mingled commonsense and terror kept him squatting where he was; after a single instinctive backward move had been greeted by a threatened launching of the homicidal dog's bulk at him.

Then, a moment later, Jamie Mackellar was standing above him; and was speaking to him in a timid, almost deprecatory voice;—a voice through whose softness ran a red tinge of menace as deadly as Bobby's own.

"You'll stay as you are," the Scot was decreeing. "Unless maybe you're craving a torn-out throat. Watch him, Bobby, boy!"

The voice was scarce raised above a whisper. Yet it carried its own enforcement. It did more.

It carried through the transom and to the ears of a man who had just rounded the corner of the alcove and whose knuckles were raised for a prearranged triple-double tap at the door-panels. The newcomer, at sound of the command, halted the motion of his knuckles; and stood shaking and listening.

"Now, then," he heard Mackellar's gentle undertones. "You'll stay there, a bit, my friend.

Make yourself as comfy as you choose, so long as you don't stir. If you stir, your time for comfort will slip away from you for good. Bobby'll see to that. I'm not worrying about your yelling for help. You aren't any more anxious for folks to butt in with questions than I am. Stay there, while I hunt around your room. I've a hunch there's something of mine here. For your own sake I hope so. For if it isn't here, I might get careless and forget to stop Bobby from flying at you."

Mackellar was eyeing the thief with much interest, as he spoke. Never before had he seen him. The fellow, very evidently, was not a frequenter of dog-shows. For dog-show habitués get to knowing one another by sight, as thoroughly as do people living on the same small-town street.

No, this was a stranger to him, and, apparently, to the dog-game. Again Jamie's brows wrinkled in perplexity. He still felt certain no outsider could have known he was bringing the Folger Cup to town; nor even of that cup's existence.

Yet here was some one who had had the forethought to engage a room on the same floor as his own and to wait until dog and master had gone out for their customary evening walk; and who had then entered the room, unlocked the closet

door and stolen the cup; putting a prearranged dummy in the trophy's bag.

Wherefore, Jamie scowled ponderingly at the rat-faced and panic-smitten thief. Then, shrugging his shoulders, he applied himself to the task of searching the room.

The search was pitiably easy. On a table in the corner was a big and bumpy parcel, swathed in newspaper. Jamie ripped open the paper and snapped the white string which bound it.

There lay the cup; shining and glowing in the rays of the single electric light. It was not dented or in any way harmed.

Jamie fought with an impulse to do a wild hieland dance, for sheer relief; and to break into discordant whoops of ecstasy; and to catch Bobby by the forepaws and gallop around the room with him.

A bare minute ago, he had been ruined and discredited. He had forfeited a bond for $3,400;—a sum whose payment would have left him bankrupt. And now, the hideous peril was past. He had won;—thanks a little to native wit and thanks most of all to the gallant dog who was his chum.

Yet, Scot-like, he restrained himself. With scarce a tremor in his mild voice, he announced:

"Here's the cup. It don't seem harmed any. And now, Mister, I'm going to take the liberty of asking you a question or so. I hope you'll have

the politeness to answer, real fluent. Because, you see, now that I've got what you stole, the police can make it pretty sad for you,—or for so much of you as Bobby may take a notion to leave unchewed. I can prove by a dozen people that this is my cup. So the burden seems to be with you. I'm hoping you'll speak up, nice, friend."

The listener, outside the door, wiped the fear-sweat from his eyes and tiptoed noiselessly away.

"First of all," began Jamie, "maybe I can solve one end of it without pestering you to talk."

Going to the closet door, he took from his trousers pocket the key of his own closet and tried it in the lock.

"H'm!" he mused as the key caught the wards and turned. "The law makes 'em have special keys for the room doors—in locks that any novice can pick; the same as you picked the lock of my room door, awhile back. But they save cash by having the same locks and keys for all the closets on the floor. You didn't even have to pick my closet lock. Now, let's get along to the next cage. Who sicked you onto this job? You never did it on your own hook."

The man on the floor said no word. Jamie waited, courteously, for a few seconds. Then he spoke again.

"Son," said he, " 'Guilty' is such a big word that I misdoubt me if any one short of the Al-

mighty, Himself, has the right to use it. And I misdoubt me if even He uses it, over-often. I don't know what rotten bad luck you was dragged through, before you took up this kind of job; nor yet how bitter you may have needed the ready cash you got for it. That's why I don't want to get you hauled to the hoosgow, if I can help it. I've found what you stole. And I'm content to let it go at that, if I can. But—well, I'm as inquisitive as an old hen. And I think I've paid my shot for the right to know something about all this. I'm hoping you'll speak up. Who was it put you onto his job?"

Still no reply from the abjectly blinking and shuddering figure on the floor. But the thief had shifted his fascinated gaze from Bobby's snarling visage and was staring mutely at Jamie.

"Who's at the bottom of this thing?" repeated Mackellar, his patience beginning to wear thin.

The thief's mouth worked convulsively. But he did not answer.

"Friend," said Jamie, "Patience is a condiment; not a beverage. Too much of it is apt to cloy."

He paused, struck with approval of his own epigram.

"Taken by and large, Bobby," he announced gravely, turning to the dog, "taken by and large

that's by far the best thing I've said in a couple of hours."

He looked again at the mute thief.

"I'm sorry," said Jamie, in resignation. "I made you a fair offer. I offered to let you go, if you'd tell. It was the best I could do. I'm thinking the police can make you talk glibber than I can. Bobby, lad, watch him. I'll be back, as soon as I can ring for the night-watchman. Keep him there!"

He went to the door and unlocked it. The thief started convulsively. Bobby, at the slight move, crouched lower; his lips wrinkling farther away from his gleaming white fangs. Jamie paused on the threshold, and glanced back inquiringly.

"I'll—I'll come through!" babbled the thief.

"Good!" approved Mackellar. "I'm right glad. I'd hate to think of any man being stuffed into jail by me. It must be a direful sort of place, jail must. Worse'n a sleeping car, most likely. Now then, who's at the bottom of this thing?"

"I—I don't know," stammered the thief.

Jamie took another step, hallward.

"That's right!" jabbered the man. "It's straight. I don't know. I used to work with a guy named Kellty. He travels with a lot of different kinds of folks. He comes to me last week and offers me $300 to do a job for a friend of his.

He didn't say who it was. God's truth, that's straight. He didn't. Nor I didn't ask. Kellty's done that, a lot of times. He gets his, and then he farms out the work. He plays safe. I——"

"All right," assented Jamie. "He plays safe. There must be an extra warm corner in hell for the men who 'play safe' like that. Right next to the furnace for vivisectionists and for motorists who run over dogs. Go ahead. What did this Kellty person tell you to do?"

"Told me to take this room here, to-night; and then to tip a bellboy to tell me when you and the dog went out for a walk; and go into your room—he give me the number—and get the cup. He said he'd be here for it, somewhere around twelve o'clock. When I heard the scratching—but he was going to give his knock——"

"I see," said Jamie, his head sinking on his chest, in thought. "I see. Maybe you're lying. Most likely you are. I s'pose I could prove it by waiting here for Kellty. If there is any Kellty. But there'd be no sense in keeping Bobby up late, when he's got to show in the morning. He'll be needing his sleep, worse'n I need to find out if you're stringing me. He——"

"It's the truth, I'm telling you!" insisted the other. "Wait for him if you want to. And you promised to——"

"Yep," agreed Jamie, still ruminating. "I

promised to let you off. And I'm going to do like I said. That being a way I've got. I don't think there'd be any use in jailing you. Justice won't be much the worse for my letting you go. I guess, with a chap like you, jail terms are mostly like ferryboats. If you miss one of 'em, you're pretty sure of getting the next. Besides, maybe it's true what you've been telling me. It isn't the first time some big man has got his dirty work done by some little feller; nor the first time the little feller has passed the buck to a littler feller. In my old trucking job, the boss always made the foreman do the firing. And then the boss used to brag he'd never had the heart to fire an employee. Kellty must be something like him. Or else, Kellty's boss is. Gee, but I'd like fine to meet up with Kellty's boss! Kellty don't matter. Good night, son. Come along, Bobby!"

The discomfited thief was not the only man in the hotel district to receive a sensational visit in his room that midnight. Lucius Frayne, owner of the famed Lochinvar Kennels, was sitting in the living room of his suite at a far more pretentious hostelry, a few blocks distant, when a visitor was announced.

Frayne hurried forward to meet his eagerly-expected guest—a solemn-looking man of late middle age and of semi-clerical garments. The visitor was empty-handed. Noting this, Frayne's

gladly expectant expression changed to a glower. The guest began to speak, hastily, nervously. And, listening, Frayne's glower was transformed to an aspect of blank panic.

"No," finished the clerical-looking man, "I didn't wait for any more. I'd heard enough. It was up to me to make a getaway, if I wanted to make it while the making was still good. But he was ordering Davidge to squeal. And Davidge is the squealing kind—once his nerve's broke. So I——"

But Lucius Frayne was not listening. He was striding to the telephone; to call up Perry Roke, his kennel-manager.

The airy roofgarden of the Coromandel Hotel was reverberant with barks, pitched in a dozen keys, expressive of every canine mood from joy to fretful indignation.

Seventy-eight collies were benched there; for the annual specialty show of the Transcontinent Collie Club. They were tied, at intervals, along the four walls; or were parked out, on rugs and blankets, upon the stone terraces that flanked the roofed space.

Handlers were busy with brush and cloth and shears and powder. Owners were chatting, in groups, around the wide central space roped off

for a judging-ring. A trickle of spectators had begun to seep into the garden.

Jamie Mackellar had been up at dawn. He had taken Bobby for a romp in the nearest park; and then back to the hotel for a supplementary grooming. All Jamie's prophetic dread of mishap had fled. Now that the real danger had come and gone, he was blithely certain of the day's outcome.

Jauntily he left the elevator, at the roofgarden's entrance, and strolled into the clangorous place; Bobby pacing along in grave dignity at his side. In one hand, Mackellar carried the kitbag which held Bobby's show-paraphernalia. Under his other arm was tucked the bulging canvas sack, containing the huge cup he had rescued from Davidge.

During the best part of a sleepless night Jamie had turned over in his puzzled mind the details of the theft and its possible causes. Granting the truth of the thief's spluttered story—and Mackellar, against his own better judgment, believed it—what object had Kellty's unknown employer in wanting the cup? If he were not a dog-man, he could never have heard of it, nor have known Jamie had it at the hotel. If he were a dog-man, he could never hope to exhibit the cup as his own. It would be recognized at once by any of a hundred fanciers.

Bit by bit, Jamie had sifted the mess until he had come upon the only solution which did not seem to him hopelessly fantastic. The instigator of the theft was of course a dog-man—a collie man, at that, since he had known of Mackellar's coming to town with the cup; and the hotel and room at which the Scot always stayed at such times.

This man had known the loss of the Folger Cup and the forfeiture of the bond would wreck Mackellar's finances. Perhaps he wished, in such case, to buy Lochinvar Bobby, at the forced sale. For Jamie had received a score of rich offers for the champion. Or perhaps he merely wished to ruin Jamie and drive him out of the dog-game. Perhaps both motives were his.

But Jamie had not, to his knowledge, an enemy in the world, unless—unless—! Into his memory slipped the old Gaelic proverb:

"Your worst ill wisher is he who once has done you a wrong."

In Jamie's placid life, one man alone had done him a deliberate wrong. And that one man was Lucius Frayne; who had cheated him so cruelly in the purchase of Lochinvar Bobby. The fact that Bobby had proved such a godsend to his Scotch master and had systematically beaten the best dogs of his former owner, was quite enough to account for the most rancorous enmity. This,

apart from Frayne's repeated efforts to buy back the dog.

Jamie put the suspicion from him, as unworthy. But it would not depart. Even as he came into the roofgarden, this morning, it was simmering, annoyingly, in the back of his brain.

Bobby still following him, Mackellar made his way to the Show superintendent's table; to turn over to the club his cup. The cup, by all rules, must be given thus, by its temporary holder, to the superintendent; at the outset of every show. And it must stand, among the other trophies on the table, until it should be reawarded at the close of the judging.

Jamie was eager to be rid of the responsibility of the treasure; until, in event of his victory, it should be declared permanently his own, after the judging of the "special" for Best Dog In Show.

Thus, before stopping to bench his dog, he went straight to deposit the cup.

The superintendent was standing beside the long table, talking to a newspaper reporter. Jamie approached to within a few feet of the trophy-laden board. Then he halted so abruptly that he almost stepped on the close-following Bobby.

There,—directly in front of him, in the table's very center and towering high above the largest

of the lesser trophies,—loomed the Folger Cup.

There it stood; the morning sunlight caressing its gleaming surface and playing in and out of its exquisite fretwork.

There stood the Folger Cup!

But the Folger Cup was in the canvas bag, under Jamie Mackellar's gripping arm!

Mute, glassy-eyed, numb of mind, the little Scot blinked at the phenomenon.

"Bobby, lad!" he mumbled. "D'ye see what I see, Bobby? But of course you don't. Because it's not there. Eh, Bobby, but 'tis a woeful thing for a man's wits and a man's eyes to gang agley and trick him like this! I——"

The reporter had passed on. The superintendent, catching sight of Jamie, came forward to welcome him.

"I was afraid you might be sick, Mr. Mackellar," said he, pumphandling the limp fingers. "When you sent the Folger Cup around by a messenger, instead of bringing it, yourself, I thought something might have prevented you from getting to the show. Hello, Bobby!" he went on, stooping to pat the collie's classic head. "Going to make a try for the third and last leg of the cup, eh?"

"Ou, aye!" blithered Jamie, brilliantly. "Aye, man. The cup. The—the—the—cup! To be sure, the—cup. Aye!"

The sound of his own idiotic babblings roused him from his trance.

"What time, now—that is, sir, how—how long ago, did the—that cup—get here?" he heard himself asking.

"It must have been more than two hours ago," answered the superintendent. "Before any of the exhibitors began to arrive. When I came in, the messenger was here, holding it with both hands, waiting for me."

"Oh, the messenger, hey?" simpered Mackellar, craftily. "Which one, now? Which messenger was it, sir? I'm curious to know if——"

"Which messenger?" repeated the superintendent, in surprise. "Why, man, how many did you send with one cup? It was an oldish cuss; dressed something like a minister. He said you had sent him around with it; and told him not to give it to any one but me; and to get a receipt for it. He——"

"Quite so, sir," breathed Jamie, his lean face a foolish mask. "To be sure, sir. The—the oldish minister, dressed something like a—a—like a cuss. That'll be the one. Of course. And—and thank you kindly for inquiring, sir."

He tottered away, leaving the superintendent disgustedly certain that the once impeccable little man had become an early-morning drunkard.

Mackellar sought out a hidden corner of the

terrace parapet. There he sat down, with Bobby curled at his feet. For ten minutes he sat there; seemingly asleep; but with his thinking-apparatus buzzing.

Then, taking out the cup he had brought from Midwestburg and had recovered from the thief, he fell to studying it. In detail he surveyed it. He tested its weight. He pored over it from every angle. After which, looking furtively about to see he was not noticed, he put it back in its bag. Hiding the bag behind some rolled-up matting, he returned to the trophy table.

There, picking up the Folger Cup from among the other trophies, he resumed his study; first of all hefting it while an approximate memory of the other cup's weight still remained in his palms. For several minutes he continued his study; his eye at last squinting as it deciphered the sterling stamp under the flare of the silver lip. He restored the cup to its place and went again to where he had left the other one. A second and briefer inspection of this was ended by his thrusting the thing contemptuously into its bag and once more concealing it under the roll of matting.

Then, with sudden cheery zest, he proceeded belatedly to bench his dog and to groom him.

Four hours later—all the regular classes of the show being judged,—five renowned champions

faced the judge in competition for the Folger Cup. The railbirds pressed thick around the ring. And a roar of genuine approval went up, when cup and rosette were handed to Lochinvar Bobby's master.

The much-contested Folger Cup had found a permanent owner! After more than a quarter-century, it had been won, outright. Fanciers crowded around Jamie, to shake his hand in loud congratulation; and to pat Bobby.

As soon as he could break free from his admirers, Jamie Mackellar worked a path through the press to where a large and portly man was standing morosely alone.

"Mr. Frayne," said Jamie, smiling sweetly up into the forbidding face, "you're a genius. You've made two cups bloom, where only one bloomed before. I've figured it out. All day, I've figured it. And I've got the answer."

He smiled again; then continued:

"When you had the Folger Cup imitated in silvered pewter, you ought to have been carefuller about the weight being the same. And you ought to have had a sterling mark faked into it. You had it cast, from a plaster mold. You didn't even spend the money to have it wrought and carved. But I'm glad you didn't make a better job of the thing. If you had, I'd never have got the right end of this tangle."

"What are you talking about, you miserable shrimp?" blustered Frayne. "Do you accuse me of——?"

"Of nothing at all, Mr. Frayne," cooed Jamie. "Only of loving the Folger Cup so much that you had it copied when you had to part with it; and sent me the copy instead of the cup. Then when you found I was sure to win it the third time—and might maybe try to sell it if ever I went broke, or take it to have a dent mended, sometime—you tried to block the danger of some jeweler telling me it was plated, by getting it stole from me. That'd make me forfeit my bond, too, and break me; and give you a chance to bid Bobby in, when they sold me up."

Frayne strode majestically away. But Jamie pattered along at his elbow.

"Then when the Kellty person told you how I'd got it back from his man," resumed Mackellar, as he trotted beside the purple-faced giant, "you knew you'd be suspicioned. You thought the man had maybe told me your name, and all about the deal,—which he didn't. So you get out the real cup and send it here ahead of me. Then, in case I tell on you, you can say I'm lying and that I sent the real cup here, myself; and that the other one must be a cup I had made for a joke or to palm off for the right one. That would alibi you and it'd prove you hadn't faked it or stolen

it. But it'd make *me* out to be looney or crooked or both. It was a fine young plan. Why, for a while, it had me dizzy. Till I——"

"Well?" roared Frayne, despairing of shaking off his tormentor, and wheeling to face him. "Prove it on me, if you can! What are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" echoed Jamie. "Why, not a thing. You're right. I couldn't prove it. And why should I want to? I've no complaint. I'm going home with two cups instead of one. And I'm going to have the fake one inscribed: *'From Mr. Lucius Frayne to Lochinvar Bobby.'* But then, of course, if folks see that inscription and get to asking me questions about it—well, you sure don't expect me to be so uncivil as not to answer 'em, do you, sir?"

CHAPTER III: THE HEAVIER WEIGHT

THIS is the yarn of two men and a dog. One of the men was Jamie Mackellar, the diminutive and mild-eyed truck owner of Scotch descent. The other man was Rufus G. Belden, arch-capitalist of the mighty young city of Midwestburg. The dog was Champion Lochinvar Bobby.

Jamie lived in the shabbiest of Midwestburg's suburbs. There in his cottage's back yard was a snug shed wherein reposed his two chief treasures. One of these was Lochinvar Bobby, the giant collie whose show earnings had helped Mackellar to buy the second of the treasures—a fair-size truck, the sole means of his comfortable livelihood.

Three years before this story begins, Mackellar had been asked to judge collies at the Midwestburg Kennel Club's annual show. He applied for an A. K. C. judging license and had no trouble at all in securing it. Within those three years Jamie had won for himself a repute for squareness and for almost uncanny accuracy of judgment in the ring; that made his services as a judge in demand from Canada to New Orleans.

The fees eked out his slender income. The experience of judging his best-loved breed was a pure delight to him.

In the interims between shows he was a meekly polite little truckman. In the judging ring he was Rhadamanthus the Terrible and John Jay combined; with the justice of Aristides thrown in for good measure.

Rufus G. Belden had taken Midwestburg and his native State by storm. He had held them up by the heels and had shaken the cash and the votes out of their reluctant pockets. At fifty, he was countless miles away from his tenement origin; and stood forth as the richest man and the strongest and most influential financier-politician of his region.

Great was Rufus G.; and greatly to be feared and much to be courted.

Having conquered his world he prepared to enjoy it. And he scanned the life stories of other magnates to learn what their pet recreations had been.

He gave but a cursory glance at Carnegie's career. The endowing of libraries and the love for books meant a trifle less than nothing to Belden. Nor could he see how any normal man could find interest in such a drab pursuit. The real enjoyment taken by still other millionaires, in art and in music, went into the same category.

Then, happening upon a newspaper sketch of J. P. Morgan's later days, Rufus G. found a paragraph which caused his dull little eyes to brighten with the inception of a genuine idea. And he read the paragraph once more—this time aloud:

> "Mr. Morgan's chief pleasure, at this period, was in the breeding and exhibiting of high-quality collies. His Cragston Kennels were the home of some of the most renowned dogs of the decade. The Cragston show benches, at Westminster and elsewhere, were always surrounded by admiring crowds.
>
> "If Mr. Morgan had not already won his fame as a financier he might well have built up a lasting reputation as America's foremost collie-breeder."

"America's foremost collie-breeder!"

Rufus G. Belden rolled the phrase under his tongue with growing relish. To be America's foremost anything-at-all was surely a pinnacle whereto a new-made multimillionaire might crave to scramble.

And now Morgan was dead. Apparently no financial overlord had succeeded him in the collie realm. The post he had created was vacant—the pedestal of "America's foremost collie-breeder."

In that ill-writ newspaper eulogy, Rufus G. read no more. Not for him was there a gleam of interest in the perusal of Morgan's art treas-

ures or other of the great man's hobbies. Belden had read enough. He had found the answer to his own problem.

He was normal enough and enough of an outdoor man to love dogs and to have some smattering of understanding of them. As a boy, in the Midwestburg tenement district, he had had for a pet a mangy and lop-eared collie of many-angled ancestry. And in memory of his long-dead chum he had always turned a kindly and more or less appraising eye on such collies as he chanced to see in the street or on his visits to the Midwestburg Show.

With true Napoleonic promptitude, Rufus G. went into action. A heavily suborned and wholly uninterested architect was sent on a round of the best-devised kennel buildings in the East.

The sporting editor of the *Midwestburg Chronicle* was detached from the paper—owned, by the way, by Belden—and was sent to New Jersey and to Great Britain with a sheaf of blank checks and with full authority to buy up to twenty of the best collies to be found on earth.

A fifteen-acre bungalow-tract, to the rear of the Belden grounds on Crescent Hill, was purchased as a kennel site. Its leases were taken over at a glittering advance and its houses razed.

Rufus G. did nothing by halves.

Within a year he was ready to commence oper-

ations on the mammoth scale he had planned. By that time he owned thirty collies, ten of them champions and fourteen of them imported; besides several supposedly promising litters of Teddy Bear pups.

These dogs were supervised by a staff of costly experts under command of Perry Roke; a veteran kennel manager whom Belden had lured from Lucius Frayne's employ by an unheard-of offer of five thousand dollars a year and expenses.

The kennel press and sporting writers all over the country had taken up the tidings of Belden's new fad; giving it and him a gratifying degree of notoriety. At a by-show or two, in that off-season, his phalanx of imported champions had swept the field. Rufus G. was radiant.

One morning, three of these importations came back by crate from such a show. Roke telephoned for a truck to bring them from the station to the Beldencroft Kennels. As the truck chugged down the drive toward the kennel buildings, Rufus G. himself strolled out to the yards to greet the returning heroes.

He arrived at the inclosure, just as his men were lifting the last of the three crates from the tonneau. The mild-eyed little truckman had dismounted from his high seat, and was watching with eager interest the uncrating of the trio.

Belden would not have given a second glance to the meek little fellow; had not an action of Perry Roke's attracted his attention. The kennel manager was bossing the job of taking the three winners from their luxurious crates. As Roke approached one of these slatted boxes, the truckman was standing directly in his way.

Now Roke had a jovial habit of spinning or of shouldering out of his path any lesser employees of Beldencroft who might chance to get in his way. He carried this same merry custom into effect with tradesfolk and other humble visitors who came to the kennels on business. He was a rollicking, impetuous soul, at best; and his new office and gilt-edge salary had added to his wonted gay arrogance.

Belden looked on in mild expectation, to see the manager elbow the diminutive truckman aside; or even, in an access of merriment, catch him by the slack of the trousers and toss him back on the motor's seat.

Roke did nothing of the sort. Instead, he walked deferentially around the man. "Walked around him, like he was a lake," as Rufus G. afterward described it.

And while Belden was still wondering whether or not this was a bit of absent-mindedness on the manager's part, Roke turned from lifting a

shaggy tricolor collie out of one of the crates and asked the truckman with genuine deference:

"How do you think his winter coat's coming along, sir?"

The truckman ran his expert fingers through the pile of black fur and said briefly:

"He's still shy on undercoat."

Again Belden listened expectantly. He took real enjoyment in hearing Roke's lurid blasphemy, when an outsider ventured a criticism on any Beldencroft collie. But the redoubtable manager forebore now to swear or even to call the critic a wall-eyed liar.

Roke said with queer humility:

"It's a shade light, perhaps. But it's coming on. I think he will be in full bloom for the Midwestburg Show. Would you care to look at the others? I'll be delighted to show you over the kennels."

"I'd like to, real well," said the truckman, regretfully, as he mounted the high seat, "but I'm due back at the station in ten minutes."

"Any time you'd care to go over the bunch," gushed Roke, with warm cordiality, "let me know; and it'll be a pleasure to show them to you. So long, Judge!"

Belden came forward, his fat face creased with bewilderment.

"Another minute and you'd have kissed him!"

he observed, in fine sarcasm. "Is he your long-lost brother? Or does he just hold the clew to the billion-dollar forgery and your kidnapping of the old earl's only child?"

"That was little Jamie Mackellar, sir," replied Roke, as if this explained everything.

"H'm!" mused Belden. "From the way you kowtowed to him, I thought he might be the Prince of Wales or even the rent collector. Besides"—with a flicker of memory—"didn't you call him 'Judge'?"

"He's judging collies at the next Midwestburg Show," said Roke sullenly. "And probably at St. Louis, and again at Baltimore. If you'd rather have had me kick him out of here, when he's got the judging of our dogs at three out of five of their next shows, I——"

But the rest of the insubordinate speech went unheard. With a long whistle, Rufus G. Belden was staring up the drive in the wake of the vanishing truck. And presently he walked off toward the house, his fleshy head bent low above his fleshier torso.

Another Napoleonic idea had smitten him. Rufus G. was strong on Napoleonic ideas. They had given him his fortune, and his collie kennels. And now he planned they should do still more for him. While this one was in its first ten minutes of infancy Belden called up a Midwestburg pri-

vate-detective agency and gave curt instructions.

Five days later the agency sent him a report. After reading and rereading it and scribbling a few memoranda, he went into action.

Sunshine, soon afterward, began to filter into the financial life of Jamie Mackellar. Luck, for the past year, had run counter and had swirled the little Scot around and around in its eddies; stranding him at last on a shoal whence he was toiling in vain to push clear.

His twelve-year-old daughter, Elspeth, had had a long illness, and had been sent at last to the Adirondacks in order to mend a set of endangered lungs. This line of treatment was not inexpensive; nor had been the ten preceding weeks of trained nurses and doctors.

Jamie's son, Donald, in a technical-school course, was needing eternal help; to pay for extras. Jamie's wife, now, in reaction from the long strain of caring for her sick daughter, had suffered what more prosperous people would have called a nervous breakdown. Pneumonia had followed; and she was convalescing, with Elspeth, in the cruelly expensive Adirondack sanitarium camp.

Jamie's truck, too, had been damaged, to the tune of one hundred and eighty dollars, by a collision with a drunken coal-driver's machine. And it had been out of commission through a

non-sparable fortnight. Jamie himself had wrenched the tendons of his left arm, in the same smash-up; and was laid by for twice as long.

The driver, whom he hired during the fortnight in which his own enforced idleness overlapped that of the truck, had cheated him unmercifully at such hours as he was not loafing on the job.

Much time was lost; more steady customers were lost; most money was lost. The mortgage on the cottage and shed was due, and its hard-up holder refused to renew it. The family doctor, consultants, specialists and nurses had well-nigh rent asunder Mackellar's sparse wad of savings.

Double bills from the sanitarium were doing the rest of the dismemberment task to his scanty hoard. Gloomily, the little man went at his long-neglected duties. By mortgaging the truck he paid another instalment on his fast-swelling debts.

It was just the same world-old, ever-repeated sordid hard-luck story; which has nothing new about it, except to the man to whom it happens. To Jamie it was hideously, dizzyingly new.

Then one night he came back to his musty cottage with a new lightness in his step and with an off-key whistle on his lips. As he unlocked the front door, after putting away the truck, the chill and desolation of a temporarily wifeless and childless home struck him, as usual, full in the face.

But to-night it failed to wring from him the wonted half-stifled sigh. Nor did he abate the soft off-key whistling.

Something besides desolation smote Mackellar, as he swung open his house door.

From out the inner recesses of the cottage, at first sound of Jamie's step on the yard-wide porch, rushed a big furry shape which flung itself bodily on the returning man; whimpering in sheer joy, patting at his chest with flying white forepaws, striving to lick Mackellar's grubby face, then dropping on all fours and whirling about him in an ecstasy of welcome.

Thus, ever, did Lochinvar Bobby greet the homecoming of the man who was his god. And thus ever did Mackellar's Scotch heart go forth in eager gladness at the welcome of his collie chum.

Now, catching Bobby's classic head between his gnarled palms, he petted the dog and spoke a word of cheer to him before going on into the kitchen to light the lamp and stir up the fire and make ready his own solitary supper. Bobby, according to his custom, followed close upon Jamie's heels into the kitchen and kept beside him at every step from stove to cupboard or to table.

Always Bobby did this, since the family's absence had promoted him from shed to house. But to-night there was something more than or-

dinarily buoyant in the collie's dancingly eager steps and in the look he raised to his master's newly bright face.

With the odd sixth sense of his kind, Bobby recognized that his little god was exuberantly happy. And, loyally, he shared that happiness; even though its cause might be far beyond his canine understanding. Mackellar was happy. Wherefore unquestioningly his dog was also happy. Which is a collie's way.

Like most lonely dog men, Mackellar, in lack of other confidants, had fallen long since into talking to the collie as though to a human. And to-night as he wrought over the sulking stove, his relieved spirits forced him into light-hearted speech.

"Bobby, lad," he said, shaking out the match with which he had kindled the range, and smoothing the dog's uplifted head as he spoke, "Bobby, lad, I'll warrant I've fair sickened you with the havering and complaining I've made you listen to, this past month or more. Well, I've a different dose of medicine for you to-night, Bobby. A rare good word-tonic; worth a hantle of dollars the bottle. Want to hear my news, Bobby?"

At each repetition of his name, Bobby's plumed tail had wagged with fresh vigor; and his wistfully deepset dark eyes had lighted with a pathetic eagerness.

"Well, then, Bobby," proceeded Mackellar, "here it is, in a nutshell. In two or three nutshells, I mean. For it's that kind of news, Bobby. It came in bunches! First of all, you know how Brewster couldn't renew the mortgage at any price, because he said he was in a hole for ready money? Huh? Sure you remember it, Bobby. You remember it perfectly. Don't go saying you don't. You remember everything. Well, he hails me on the street to-day and he tells me he's sold the mortgage to a lawyer chap. Ellis is his name.

"And I go chasing to Ellis. And what d'you s'pose Ellis told me, Bobby? Said he's just bought the mortgage in, with some others, as an investment; and he didn't want to foreclose at all; and he's letting it run on, indefinite-like. And he had me sign one of those whereas papers; and that was all. And now we don't need to fash ourselves over the mortgage till next interest time! Think of that, Bobby. Think of all the fine high-grade sleep I've lost, for nothing! Are you thinking of it, Bobby, lad?"

Apparently Bobby was; for he evinced much gay emotion at the repeated mention of his name and at the upward inflection in Jamie's crooning voice.

"Yon's the first nutshell, Bobby," went on the jubilant Mackellar. "Here's the second: As I was going out, Ellis just happened to say he'd

bought up the truck's mortgage, too, and that that could stand till doomsday. Wasn't it funny the same man happened to pick up the only two mortgages I ever had, Bobby? But they aren't the only ones I've got now, Bobby. I've got another. A second mortgage on both the truck and the house. Ellis gave it to me. That's the meatiest nutshell of the lot.

"He got me to chatting; and he found out the times aren't all they might be for us, here, Bobby. And he suggested—suggested it himself, mind you, Bobby—that I take out the second mortgage. He made out the whereas papers, in a jump, while I waited. And I came away from there with a check for five hundred dollars.

"Know what five hundred dollars means, Bobby? It means more soup meat and gasoline than you and the truck could eat in six months. That's one thing it means, Bobby. And, on the side, it means some calm nights' sleep and a new appetite for a poor old cuss named James Angus Mackellar, Bobby."

He set the kettle forward from its repose on the back of the range, and crossed to the table to lay the red-and-white cloth for his supper. As he went he talked.

"So much for the second nutshell, Bobby. But there's a third. Honest, there is, Bobby. A third. *'Gin they come by ane, they come by twa; and*

eke they come by three,' as the Hieland poet chap says, Bobby. Here's the third: A contractor man, named Scally, sends for me, this noon, and offers me the biggest trucking job I've ever had my teeth in, in all my days. And he's so scared I'll renege on it, he makes me sign a forfeit paper. I had a time to keep from laughing in his face. Why, a job like that is meat and drink to the truck and me, Bobby!

"If we're not out of the woods, we're so near out that we can hear the chickens cluck, out in the clearing. Now, let me get this supper gobbled; and feed you; and then write all about it to Mistress. When we go for our walk, to-night, you and I will mail it to her. I'm speiring she'll do a bit better in the sleeping line, herself, when she gets our news. Eh, Bobby, lad, but this is sure one glorious old world to do our living in!"

One evening, a few weeks later, as Jamie Mackellar was laboriously scrawling his daily letter to his Adirondack-held wife, there came a rap at the door. Thinking a neighbor was calling he shouted, "Come in!" and in leisurely fashion laid aside his sputtering pen.

Bobby, drowsing at his master's feet, had sprung up; at sound of the loud knock. Now, head lowered, and growling far down in his shaggy throat, the collie was advancing slowly toward the door.

"Hey, there!" admonished Jamie. "Bobby boy, that's no way to meet comp'ny. D'ye mean to say you don't know the scent of every neighbor we've got? Sure, you do. Shame on you for making b'lieve you don't! Come you back here and lie down, till I——"

The opening of the front door cut short the reproof. At Jamie's idly spoken order, Bobby had turned back into the room. Now, pausing, the dog growled unfriendlily over his shoulder at the unseen guest.

The door swung wide. Filling the whole threshold, stood a man in a sable overcoat. Mackellar blinked dazedly once or twice at the starkly unexpected visitor, before his scattered wits could register the fact that this newcomer was no less a dignitary than the Hon. Rufus G. Belden; whom he had once or twice beheld from afar and of whom he had had a fleeting glimpse when he trucked the three cratefuls of dogs to Beldencroft.

But, even then, he continued to stand, gazing pop-eyed at the magnate. He knew it was utterly impossible the mighty Rufus G. could be calling on Jamie Mackellar.

Timidly, at last, he advanced toward the benignly beaming Rufus G.; and ducked his tousled head in salutation. It was then he noted that Belden was not only advancing into the room but

was actually holding forth one fat hand with the unmistakable intent of shaking.

"Good evening, sir," faltered Jamie. "I—I—Won't you come in? I mean—won't you sit down, a minute? I'm——"

"Good evening, Mackellar," returned Rufus G., shaking the incredulously shrinking hand of his dazed host and settling himself in the room's one comfortable chair. "I stopped, on the way from the station, for a look at the big collie of yours that Roke told me about. The one you cleaned up with at Westminster and at the Transcontinent. Roke says—Is that the dog?" he broke off, catching sight of Bobby, who at Jamie's rebuke had lain down under the shadow of the red-and-white tablecloth. "Let's have a squint at him."

"Bobby," said Jamie quietly.

At the first syllable the great dog was on his feet and advancing to where his puzzled master stood awaiting him.

"Minds you well," commented Belden, noting the electrically swift obedience.

"Yes, sir," assented Jamie. "But why wouldn't he? You see, he's my dog."

He spoke in perfect good faith. To this born collie man it would have seemed the most unnatural thing in the world if his well-loved and better-trained dog had hesitated in obeying a command of his.

From boyhood, Jamie had been able to rely on the instant obedience of his succession of collies; and he had secured this obedience through love and intelligence, and not by fear. He had never struck one of his dogs. Nor had he had occasion to. (Neither, by the way, has any man who has made a study of collie nature.)

Belden was queerly impressed. More than once he had shouted himself hoarse, in an effort to make one of his imported collies come to him; and the object of his bellowings had merely yawned in most insolent fashion and had strolled away. Collies, as a breed, have reduced insolence to a fine art, for the benefit of those whom they do not care for.

It is true, the Beldencroft dogs obeyed Roke; and obeyed him with suspicious promptitude. But when they came at the kennel-manager's call, they had a way of flattening themselves on their stomachs and of crawling thus the last few steps of the journey to his feet. There was, too, a look in their eyes at such times that would have sickened the best type of collie fancier and would have made such a fancier's fist itch to come in contact with the whip-and-toe-wielding kennel-manager's jaw.

This willing and lovingly eager obedience of Bobby's, to his master's half-whispered order, impressed the financier fifty-fold more than had

all Roke's praises of the dog. And back in the astute brain of Rufus G. still another idea was born.

But, of course, there were dogs who delighted to be noticed and who were glad to come to any human's call. Perhaps Lochinvar Bobby might be one of these. And Belden leaned forward, snapping his fleshy fingers at the collie, saying at the same time with loud cordiality:

"Come here, old boy! Come along!"

Bobby had thrust his nose affectionately into Jamie's cupped hand. Now, at the booming call of Belden, the dog lifted his classic head toward the visitor, surveyed him with coldly inquiring eyes, then deliberately turned his back to him and sat down.

"He's—he's what they call a one-man dog, sir," explained Mackellar, in wriggling excuse for his chum's rudeness. "He don't take up much with strangers. Bobby, boy! Go over to the gentleman, and stand there!"

At the order, Bobby got to his feet; though without the eager speed that had accompanied his first reply to Jamie's call. With lofty reluctance he paced slowly across the room and came to a halt in front of Belden. There he stood, statue-like, the mellow radiance of the table lamp bringing out every tiniest detail of his magnificent body and head.

Gazing, Rufus G. Belden drew in a quick breath of admiration. For more than a year, in off hours, he had been making a close study of collie show-points. And already he was enough of a connoisseur to realize that this dog, posing in front of him, was one of the foremost collies of America, if not of the world.

There was a majestic beauty and symmetry about Bobby that seemed to go beyond mere "points." From the perfectly chiseled muzzle and expression-filled eyes and small tulip ears, to the heavily plumed brush, there was not an inch of him that did not spell superperfection. And the newly developed collie-appreciation in Belden paid mute tribute to his excellence.

For perhaps a full minute Rufus G. surveyed the dog, his fat and florid face a poker mask. Then he inquired tersely:

"How much?"

Jamie blinked questioningly. Recalling tales of Scotch shrewdness in bargaining, Belden misread the look.

"I am asking you," he explained with elaborate simplicity, "how much you want for the dog. I like him. And I'll pay you a fair price for him. How much?"

Jamie's sallow face went pink; and there was less than ordinary meekness in his mild blue eyes. Tricky exhibitors had seen that granite aspect,

in the ring. But seldom had it before flashed across Mackellar's visage in private life. And as quickly as it appeared it was gone.

Belden had not so much as caught a glint of it, so absorbed was he in studying Bobby, point by point.

"Lochinvar Bobby is not for sale, sir," said Jamie, steadying his voice. "Lochinvar Bobby is my chum. He's no more for sale than one of my children would be. But I thank you for the compliment, none the less."

"Come, come!" laughed Rufus G., stretching out lazily in his chair and making as if to stroke Bobby's ruff—an attention from which the collie drew away in dignified haste. "Come, come, man! Just forget for a minute that your folks hailed from Scotland, and stop haggling. Name a price. Of course it will be an exorbitant price. Every one stings a rich man. If the post office wasn't run by Uncle Sam, its clerks would charge me half a dollar apiece for every two-cent stamp I buy. So I'm braced to hear you put a national-debt figure on the tike. And the chances are that I won't pay it. But name a sum, anyhow. Then we'll have a starting point. How much?"

And now even Belden, glancing shrewdly across at the little man, could not miss the sudden flare that leaped into the wrinkled face. A past master in the art of reading men, Rufus G. re-

ised his earlier estimate of his host and prepared is campaign along new lines.

Meantime Jamie had once more mastered himelf, and was saying mildly:

"I'm not haggling, Mr. Belden. I am glad the og pleases you. But he is not for sale. He and are chums. If I can't make you believe that, nd if I can't make you understand that I'm in arnest, I'm sorry."

There was gentleness in the soft tones, but here was also finality. Nor was there a tinge of we or of favor-currying for the city's mightiest nan.

Rufus G.—so long accustomed to servility hat it affected him somewhat as might a fourth elping of ice-cream—was almost as pleased by he novelty as he was piqued by this balking of ne of his seldom-balked whims. He grunted, oncommittally. Then he started on a new tack.

"Just as you say," he assented with unshaken oviality. "There are as many ways of buying vhat I want as there are ways of cooking eggs. Because the simplest of those ways won't get across,—well, let it go at that. I was interested n the dog because of what Roke has told me about im and because he won against such a stiff field t Westminster and because he won the Folger Cup. And now that I've seen him, he's twice as

good as I expected. But we'll come back to him another time. What ought dog-feed to cost?"

Jamie's worried lack of comprehension, as to his guest's awkwardly cryptic words about Bobby, melted in the interest of this new theme.

"Why, sir," he said, "you can spend a fortune in feeding a kennel of collies. Or you can do it for a bottom price and still keep your dogs in prime condition. More die from overfeeding than from underfeeding. Just like folks. You can get plate meat, at wholesale, for three or four cents the pound; sometimes for much less. You can buy butcher scraps for almost nothing, and stale broken bread for little more. There are other parts of meat and bone that cost a song, by wholesale. Then, with skim milk, and odds and ends of vegetables, and perhaps a little patent food now and then, and a knack for cooking up your combination—why, each of your dogs ought-n't to cost you as much as a dollar a week; at very most. Maybe not much more'n a half of that. Especially if you own a cow. And——"

"H'm!" cut in Belden, as if dismissing a subject that did not interest him. "Roke is a thrifty young man. It won't be his fault if he starves. I always enjoy auditing his bills. I'll enjoy it more after this. It's a real delight to be rich. I make every one around me so happy—whether I want to or not. . . . Ever see my Belden-

croft Chieftain? Big rangy young sable. Plain face. True Hector-Stirling blend. Bred him myself. Eleven months old now. Best pup I've been able to breed, so far. By my imported Seedley Sabbatical, out of——"

"I know the pup you mean, sir. I've never seen him. But didn't he get Winners, last month, at Akron? A nice pup, from all accounts."

"You've said it," approved Belden. "Took Winners, at Akron. And good enough to take Winners, at the big Midwestburg Show, next week."

He spoke carelessly; nor did he seem to note the sudden ramrod stiffness that came into Jamie's backbone and features.

"Yep," prattled on Rufus G. "He's easy good for Winners, at Midwestburg next week."

"Excuse me, sir," interposed Jamie, with an odd iciness in his low voice. "Excuse me. But you perhaps don't know I am to judge collies at the Midwestburg. So, of course, I can't discuss——"

"That dog, now," pursued Belden, totally ignoring the hint; "there's a funny bit of history about him. At least not about him at all, but about a dog he's due to meet there. Ever hear of Willard Ulrich's new imported collie, Greencourt Golden Boy?"

"Yes, sir," said Jamie, the ice still in his voice

and eyes. "I've read about him. I never saw him."

"No? Well, you will next week. He's entered for the Midwestburg. I tried to buy Golden Boy as soon as I heard how he cleaned up at Crufts and at the Crystal Palace Show in London. I cabled his owner as soon as I read it. Offered him six thousand dollars for the dog. And what does Ulrich do but cable him, three days later than I did, and offer sixty-four hundred dollars! Ulrich got him. He got him over my head. Outbid me. Got the best of Rufus G. Belden—the little New York shrimp! No man ever yet did that and got away with it. I hear he's joking about it; laughing at me for losing out, after I cabled first! That isn't on the free list."

He paused; his eyes clouding like some cranky child's; his fat lips twisting peevishly. Then he went on:

"I'm going to beat Golden Boy, at every show he goes to; if I've got to buy up the whole collie output of both continents to do it. I'm going to keep him from getting his American championship. I'll have at least one collie better than he is, at every show he goes to. I'm going to make that New York butter-in think he has blown sixty-four hundred dollars on a piece of cheese. I'm going to do it if it costs me a half-million dollars. I can do it, too. I've got a collie in mind

that can win over anything else I've ever seen. I'm going to get him. But I can't get him just yet. And, anyhow, it'd be too late to transfer ownership in time for the Midwestburg. The best I can put against Golden Boy, there, is my Beldencroft Chieftain. Chieftain is the better dog. Far and away the better dog."

He spoke with truculent authority. Jamie made no reply.

"I'm saying," growled Belden with hot arrogance, "that my Chieftain is the better dog."

"I heard you," responded Mackellar, frigidly. "And I'm hoping you also heard me when I said I am to judge collies at that show, and that I can't discuss the entries beforehand with anyone."

"Rot!" scoffed Belden, forcing a return to his former joviality. "D'you know how I made my pile? I didn't try finesse and diplomacy and all that sort of piffle. When I wanted a thing I went and got it. I went at it with my head down and both fists working overtime. And I smashed through to the thing I was after. That's still my way; till somebody can show me a better."

He laughed very loudly indeed, and stared hard at Jamie. But Mackellar might have been carved out of rough stone. Leaning toward his little host, Belden laid one ample forefinger on the Scot's wizened chest.

"Get this!" said he with a sudden authority

that somehow impressed the deeply offended Mackellar and turned his grimness to perturbation. "Get this! It's nearer to diplomacy than I generally bother to try for. If I wanted to make sure of a dog of mine winning, d'you know what I'd do? First of all I'd find out who was to judge. Then I'd find out all I could about that judge. If he had a weakness or a black spot in him I'd find it. If he had the name of being square and I couldn't reach him any other way, I'd look into his finances. Money is a big thing. But the lack of it is a hell of a sight bigger."

Jamie sat speechless, his brain in a whirl. Through the mists of his astonishment boomed the trombone voice of Rufus G.

"If I found he was down and out, and had mortgages plastered over everything, and had big expenses and hard luck—well, first of all I'd stick him deeper into debt. Into debt to *me*. So deep he couldn't climb out. So deep that he couldn't pay for the keep of his sick wife and kid, without the money he owed. So deep that he'd be turned inside out and smashed flat if his debts were called in. So deep that his chattel mortgage would include every stick and wheel and every item of livestock he owned. Then I'd say to a certain lawyer: 'Well done, Ellis, my friend!' Then I'd have Scally tie the man up with a forfeit clause in a contract he couldn't keep

without his mortgaged truck. And then I d go to this judge and I'd say to him——"

Jamie Mackellar leaped to his feet with a force that upset his rickety chair and brought the drowsing Bobby to his side with a bound. Scrambling at top speed to the front door the little man flung it wide, with a bang.

Wheeling on the placidly observing Belden he shrilled in wild Gaelic fury:

"Get out of here! Get *out,* I'm telling you!"

In no way impressed, Rufus G. lolled back in his chair and fingered a cigar. He smiled with benign tolerance up at the dancingly enraged little Scot; as one might smile at the clumsy antics of some defective child.

"As soon as you get all that honest indignation out of your system," he soothed, "we'll come down to brass tacks. I've no wish to foreclose on you, man. Do the right thing by me and I'll do the right thing by you. But if you'd had the wit to dig out all the meaning of those papers you signed for Ellis, you'd see I have you in a very tidy little hole. And 'chattel mortgage' means Lochinvar Bobby, you know, along with the rest. The dog I'm going to block Golden Boy with, at later shows. Now suppose we talk like grown men, and not like two——"

"I've told you twice to get out of here!" foamed Mackellar, his shrill voice at last breaking through

the rumbling volume of Belden's speech. "And I'll not tell you again. Go, now, while you can go safe. If I use force on you——"

The big man's laugh broke in on his sputterings. Rising in leisurely fashion to his full six feet of broad-shouldered height, Rufus G. drawled:

"By force, eh? Son, do you want your sample-sized body squashed as flat as your finances?"

Jamie was dead-white with a wrath that made him shake as with a hard chill. Turning to the excited dog at his side he whispered pantingly:

"Bobby! Bobby lad! *Take* him!"

Before the command was fairly voiced, a tawny streak hurtled through mid-air like a flung spear. Before Rufus G. Belden could step aside, —almost before his right arm could be raised instinctively to defend his throat,—Lochinvar Bobby's seventy pounds of whalebone muscle crashed against his broad chest.

Aiming for the fat throat, and encountering the instinctively upflung forearm, the dog's terrible fangs sheared their way through the fur sleeve of the overcoat, through the sleeves of coat and silken shirt beneath, and to the pudgy flesh itself.

Under the impact Belden reeled backward, shouting and gobbling in terror. Catching his heel on a rung of the chair from which he had so

lazily arisen, he toppled crashingly to the floor, bringing the chair down under him.

Bobby, in wild-beast fashion, ravened for the thick throat of his victim.

Then through the din came again that panted whisper:

"Enough, Bobby boy! But *watch* him!"

Reluctantly, the splendid dog drew back from his writhing and bellowing prey. He stood over the man in tense eagerness, as once he had stood over Davidge; but made no move to attack. Belden lay asprawl, his reddened little eyes now on the giant dog above him, now on the puny man who still held wide the door.

"Are ye going?" demanded Jamie.

"I'm going," gurgled Rufus G.

"Let him up, Bobby!" ordered Mackellar.

Belden gathered himself together. His nerve returned at the let-up of the peril. In his wonted voice, he said:

"But if I know men, you'll give Winners and Best-of-Breed to Chieftain, at the Midwestburg, next week. If not—well, if you think I've been bluffing, call me."

He made for the door. At the threshold he paused, letting his eyes rest on the eagerly watching dog.

"Bobby," he mouthed, "when you belong to me, we'll have a little settlement for to-night's fun.

A little settlement, Bobby. Ever see a rawhide, when it's running red with blood? No? Well, you're going to."

He was gone. Jamie stood staring after him, paralyzed and spent from his own emotion.

Long, Mackellar stood there, while the night wind chilled him and set the lamp to flickering dangerously. And close to his side stood the great dog, looking appealingly up into his master's palsied face and longing for a word or a glance to reassure him that Mackellar's momentary trouble was past.

But no word or glance was forthcoming. After a while Jamie shut the door and wandered back into the room. Mechanically, he righted the overturned chair. Then he let himself down into it, slumping very low, with his hands hanging limp at his sides and his jaw adroop.

Lochinvar Bobby lay close beside him. Once or twice he thrust his nose against the unresponsive hand. Once or twice he whimpered softly. And never did his deep-set, sorrowful eyes shift from his god's blank face.

The fire died down. The lamp began to flicker. The silence lay heavy as a shroud. Steadily increasing cold crept through the room. And still Mackellar sat there. Still the big bronze-and-snow collie kept his moveless vigil.

At last Jamie stirred, ever so slightly. Bobby

arose and stood facing him, mutely expectant. The man's eyes fell on the dog, and into the dull face came back a trace of expression.

"Bobby!" groaned Mackellar. "You heard it. You heard it all. You heard what he said. And —and you heard what he said to you about the rawhide, Bobby. When he said that, I could 'a' cursed myself for calling you off him before you'd finished him. He—he shan't have you, Bobby! He shan't have our house, either. He shan't get the truck and make me forfeit to Scally. And he shan't make Elspeth and Mistress come home only half cured, to get sick all over again from living in one wee room, somewhere, and eating one meal a day; till I get work enough to keep 'em. He shan't, Bobby! It'd mean the death of them. Just as it'd be the breaking of all I've built up; and the loss of you, Bobby. He—he *shan't!*"

The dog whimpered and laid his beautiful head on his master's knee. The stark misery in Jamie's voice went through Bobby like hot steel. And he longed in vain to comfort the heart-crushed little man. Presently Mackellar spoke again; and, head on one side, Bobby listened as though he could understand.

"It's to be weighed, Bobby," muttered Jamie. "It's to be weighed. Like everything else in this kittle-kattle life of ours. And, Bobby, I've been

weighing it. Careful and close I've been weighing it, this past hour. Weighing it to the last grain. And here's what it comes to:

"I can play square—oh, but it's fine to be able to play square, Bobby; and I never knew it till now!—I can play square; and yon swine can get you and the house here and the truck and everything else; and still leave me with a hantle of debt that'll take me years to lift. He can strip me of everything worth while. Elspeth and Mistress are sick, Bobby; and they need lots of things, if they're to be well again. Things that cost money. And I'll have no money. I'll not even have *you* to maunder to, when I'm in the dumps, Bobby.

"And I'm like to kill him, besides, if he does what he says about—about the rawhide. Why, Bobby, lad, you've never had a blow! You'd not understand it. It'd ruin you. It'd turn my sonsie big chum into a wild brute. All that, if I play square, Bobby, lad!"

The dog licked one of Mackellar's clenched hands and whined under his breath.

Then the droning voice continued:

"All that, to salvage a wee whimperin' trifle called 'self-respect,' Bobby. And it's not worth the price! Not even if my battered old soul was to be tossed in, along with it. If I'll say 'yes' to parting with that ilk rag of self-respect, then we'll

all go on nice and comfy, same as we are now, till I have time to turn around and find a safe way out of debt. It means I keep you and the house and the truck; and that Elspeth and Mistress will get well, and Donald can keep on at his fine school, Bobby. All of that weighs too much. We've got to knuckle under and do like he says, and try not to make a bad face over the mouthful. We *got* to, Bobby. And that's all there is to it.

"He reads men, easy. And he read that I'd do as he says, even while I was ramping at him. He wins. He's worth thirty million dollars, they say, Bobby, lad. But he isn't worth anything else. And—Oh, but he'd look fair grand, roasting in The Pit! Not in the upholstered Episcopal hell, Bobby. But the true Presbyterian one that has all the good old fiery furnace and the lake of brimstone and such. Just the same—he wins. He owns us, Bobby!"

It was a haggard-faced Jamie Mackellar who stalked into Ring Number 5, a week later, to judge the collie division of the Midwestburg Kennel Club's annual show.

From above his neat black suit his lean face peered like a death mask. Jamie had done scant sleeping and less eating, this past week. Try as he would he could not regard philosophically the

sacrifice he was to make for his dear ones. He could not make himself lose gracefully.

Class after class came up for judging—"Male Puppy," "Novice," "Limit," "Americanbred"—and over each he wrought with machine-like accuracy in which there was no semblance of personal interest. He was dreading the "Open, Sable-and-White" class.

Contrary to all his tenets, he had peeped into a catalogue before entering the ring. And he had found that, though Beldencroft Chieftain was entered for "Limit" and "American bred," the Ulrich collie, Golden Boy, was entered only for "Open, Sable-and-White."

Thus, the two could not clash, at earliest, until the Winners class should be called—the ordeal in which the best dog in each regular class is brought into the ring to compete for the crowning prize of best collie of his sex, or Winner. Later, the best collie of each sex, and such dogs as are entered for specials only, are brought in, to be judged for "Best-of-Breed."

In "Limit" and in "American bred," the Beldencroft dog was shown by Rufus G.; this to the surprise of Mackellar, who supposed Roke would handle Belden's dogs for the contest, as usual.

"Wants to keep his eye on me, himself, in case I might forget to obey orders," mused the wretched Jamie.

But the sight of Belden's collie gave the judge's aching conscience a moment of surcease. Chieftain was a slashing dark sable, in quality well above the rank and file of show dogs. He was easily the best entrant in both his regular classes. With no loss, thus far, of self-respect, Jamie awarded him the blue ribbon in each class.

If only the Ulrich dog should prove inferior to Chieftain! Mackellar allowed himself to hope, even while he sickened at the proprietary grin of perfect understanding wherewith Belden favored him on receiving the two blue ribbons.

"If it isn't to-day, it'll be later on," Jamie told himself, drearily. "He's never spent all that cash, just to buy me for one show. He'll follow me wherever I'm judging; and make me give his dogs the whole cream, everywhere. And if I won't judge any more, he'll foreclose on me and get Bobby. With Bobby, he won't need me."

Into the ring, after an eternity, came the "Open, Sable-and-White" class. There were five dogs here, two of them champions. But at first glance Mackellar's expert eye settled upon one exquisite pale-gold youngster; that he would have known from his pictures, even if he had not been led in by Ulrich's kennel manager.

This was Golden Boy. And his owner had made little error in paying such a price for him.

Not once in three shows did Jamie encounter so splendid a type.

In another five minutes Golden Boy strode out of the ring, winner of the blue ribbon for his class.

Then, in pitiably short time, the Winners class was called, and the victors of the preceding classes were brought in.

The veriest tyro could have told that the final decision lay between Chieftain and Golden Boy. And three experts out of four, among the rail-birds, knew that Golden Boy was the better dog.

Jamie Mackellar drew a long breath as he watched his steward lay the purple Winners rosette and the purple-and-white Reserve Winners strip of ribbon side by side on the open judging book. Then, shutting his lips into a white line, he turned to the filthy task of selling his professional honor.

Perfunctorily he went over the several lesser candidates, then motioned Chieftain and Golden Boy to the block.

Shoulder to shoulder stood the two beautiful collies; and from between puckered lids Jamie surveyed them. Then he went over them with his sensitive fingers, testing, feeling, appraising. In turn, he made them walk and come back to their places on the block.

In a horse race or in a prize fight or a like

contest, as a rule, every spectator knows which contestant wins. But at a dog show the victory is in the brain of the judge. Wherefore the frequent upsetting of records and the wise ruling of the A. K. C. that a dog must win his championship points under no less than three judges.

It would be a simple matter for so renowned a judge as Mackellar to give the honors to Chieftain; and to explain later that Golden Boy had had some flaw which only a practiced hand could detect. This is an excuse which has served its turn, more than once. There was no possibility that his decision's honesty would be doubted. Yet this knowledge did not comfort Jamie, in the least.

Unduly long he squatted in front of the two collies, studying them. Ulrich's manager fidgeted at the prolonged strain to which his dog was put. But Belden smiled with a perfect happiness. His man was doing some really creditable acting.

Mackellar rose wearily to his feet and slouched over to the judging book. Picking up the book and the two bits of silk he returned to the block.

"What's your dog's number?" he asked Belden.

At the query, a buzz ran through the quadruple line of railbirds. For, nineteen times out of twenty, a judge asks this question first of the man to whose dog he intends to give the first prize;

and then passes along to ask the same question of the next best dog's exhibitor.

Mackellar, jotting down the two numbers in his book, heard the railbirds' hum. And he read it aright. In it he read surprise, even disappointment. But there was no hint of contempt, as at an unjust decision. The crowd might not agree with him; but it trusted him.

It trusted him!

Catching his breath in almost a sob, Jamie thrust the Winners rosette into the hand of the amazed Ulrich manager.

Then, wheeling wrathfully upon the chapfallen Belden, he proffered him the purple-and-white Reserve Winners ribbon.

"Take it, and be damned to you!" he snarled, under his breath. "Golden Boy's the better dog. Now go ahead and squash me!"

Early winter dusk was filtering down, as Jamie Mackellar plodded up his own front walk and let himself into his cottage. As always, Lochinvar Bobby greeted him rapturously.

Instead of giving the dog a friendly pat and passing on into the living room, Mackellar shut the door behind him. Then he knelt down and took the collie's classic head and shaggy ruff into his arms with a hug that strangled Bobby almost as much as it delighted him.

Getting up, Jamie walked very fast into the kitchen. From the ice box he drew a thick sirloin steak.

"Bobby," he said, "I was going to eat this, myself, to-night. I got it to—to celebrate. But there isn't anything to celebrate, Bobby. And I'm giving it to you. Eat hearty. Enjoy it, a whole lot. Because—because——. Anyhow, fall to; and get a staving good supper; before——"

The sentence stopped with a choke. Leaving his chum avidly devouring the unaccustomed feast, Mackellar stumped into the bedroom and began to rummage in a chest of drawers. By the time the steak was wolfed down, Jamie had found what he sought, and had hidden the thing in one of his pockets.

Now he came back and stood looking down in silence on Bobby. Twice the man swallowed hard and his lips trembled oddly.

He sat down in the nearest chair and called Bobby to him. Holding the dog's head between quivering hands, he began to speak.

"Bobby, lad," he mumbled, "I thought I could go through with it, to-day. I thought sure I could. I was all ready to. But—but they—they trusted me, Bobby. And—you'll remember what I said the other night about weighing things? All at once I knew that the earth and the kingdoms thereof didn't weigh one-billionth as much as the

thing that makes folks trust a chap. Whatever that thing is, I don't rightly know, Bobby. Not by name. But I had it. I've always had it. And there I was just on the edge of throwing it away. I couldn't. It weighed too much. So I——"

He choked, cleared his throat impatiently and resumed:

"Our kind of honor,—yours and mine,—isn't on the free list, Bobby, boy. It's due to cost all we got—and more. But Mistress will understand when I tell her; and she'll say I done right. She'll help me fight back to luck; like she always has. And I've got a hunch that, soon or late, square folks is bound to win through, Bobby. I *know* it. So it'll be all right, somehow, somewhen, for all of us—except you."

Again he paused, trying to steady his wabbling voice.

"It won't be all right for you, Bobby," said he. "Because you're a 'chattel'; even if you've got a soul three times too big for your big body. He'll be here any time for you, Bobby. And he'll bring the law, to take you away from me. And I could stand that if it'd be a happy home you was going to; even if it cut out the heart of me to lose you. But—you heard what he said about that—that rawhide, Bobby!"

The dog, unmoving, stood looking up into his

master's face; the dark eyes alight with loving sympathy at Jamie's tone of distress.

"Bobby," said Mackellar, speaking slowly, "he's not going to have you. He's not going to beat you and torture you. No one ever is. And, Bobby, there's just one way I can keep it from happening. Just one way. Lord, but I wish I had the right to use that same way on myself, tonight!"

He drew forth what he had taken from the chest of drawers. Bobby sniffed at its strange odor with interest.

"You'll stand looking up at me, all friendly, Bobby," went on the slow, even tone, "and loving me and believing in me. Then there'll maybe be just a second of—of hurt. And then, before you get a chance to know I've harmed you, you'll—you'll be fast asleep. There's worse things, Bobby, than being asleep;—asleep for always. Aiblins, one day you'll come galloping to meet me, Bobby lad; to lead me Home. There's that to hope for. It don't cost anything to hope. It's the only thing, besides worry, that don't cost."

He shifted the pistol to his right hand. With the left he stroked the dog's head; tenderly, lingeringly.

Bobby, puzzled by the queer caress, looked up in friendly question. Then, on the instant, the

dog's head moved from under the stroking hand and Bobby wheeled to face the open door.

Jamie, aware of a draft from the threshold, guiltily lowered the half-raised pistol and hid it under his coat. At the same time he caught Bobby by the ruff. For the dog, with bent head, was making for the doorway; wherein stood Rufus G. Belden.

"Well, well!" exclaimed Belden, as Jamie eyed him dumbly. "Pretty picture, eh? Bidding the faithful hound good-by, just as the new boss comes for him! He——"

"No!" rasped Jamie. "Bidding him good-by and godspeed, before he goes beyond your dirty reach for good. Clear out of here, unless you want to see something die that's worth a hundred of you! Chase!"

Rufus G. had caught a glimpse of the pistol's bright barrel. His small eyes widened. But he did not obey Jamie's order to go. Instead, he stood stockstill for a few seconds, eyeing the man and the dog, his lids contracting when they chanced to turn toward the bit of shiny metal. Then he walked into the room.

"The execution can wait a minute," he said quietly. "Perhaps it can wait forever. That's up to you. I came here to say something; and I'm not in the habit of leaving any place till I've had my say."

Jamie made no reply. He was fighting with a crazy yearning to let Bobby end his career by ending Belden's. And, until the mad urge could be fought down, he dared not trust himself to speak or to stir.

"I fired Roke, day before yesterday," observed Belden conversationally. "I'd been watching him for the best part of a year. But he was too clever for me, till he got careless. (They all get careless.) And I found he'd been clearing up somethink like twenty-eight hundred dollars a year, over and above his five thousand dollars salary; on dog-food graft and sales and traveling expenses. If he'd fed the collies on filet mignon and hired special trains, the bills couldn't have been as high. He stood in with butcher and baker and all."

He waited. No answer. Belden continued:

"As soon as I had the proof, I canned him. His job is empty. Want it? There's a good little house goes with it, back of the kennels. A bigger house than this. Same pay as Roke got. It's a highway-robbery salary; or at least it used to be. But I've a notion a square man, who understands the feeding-and-traveling game, can save more than half of it for me in other expenses. Besides, it'll be kind of funny to have a fellow working for me who isn't afraid of me and can't be bullied or bribed.

"By the way, I got the news yesterday, through an agency I'd sicked onto Roke, that it was he who tipped off Ulrich, by wire, about the offer I'd cabled for Golden Boy. Got a hundred dollars for the tip. A sweet soul. Want that job?"

"No!" flamed Mackellar, finding his tongue in a rush of words. "No! I don't. You can't clean me out and steal my dog and try to make a crook of me—and then settle the bill by offering me a fat job. I don't want it. I'm going to put Bobby out of your reach; and then I'm going to work like a slave till my debt's paid and I'm on my feet again. Those are all of my plans that concern *you*. I——"

"Maybe so," agreed Belden, unruffled. "Maybe so. And maybe not. When you threw me down at the show, to-day, I was for getting a city marshal and a dispossess gang, and turning you into the street before sunset; and then beating your dog to death where you could see me do it. Oh, I had a swell program laid out! Then I got to thinking. The biggest railroad deal I ever put across, was by turning an honest enemy into an honest friend. Such things put money into wise men's pockets. And I got to thinking of that, while I was cooling down, to-day. About that and about—you, Mackellar. I didn't think there was a man alive who'd throw away everything he had, and more, just for the sake of a fool

notion of squareness. And I figured I could use such a man better for my own interest than by breaking him. That isn't sloppy sentiment. It would mean cash to me. So I came around here. Want that job?"

Again Jamie did not speak; this time because he was watching Lochinvar Bobby. One of Belden's hamlike hands had come to rest on the collie's head. And not only was Bobby failing to resent it, but he was standing passively under the caress and gazing up at the intruder with a grave friendliness.

"I'm not back-tracking on anything I did," said Rufus G., with a tinge of defiance in his big voice. "It was finance. Straight finance. But—there seems to be something in this game of sportsmanship that's outside of finance. I don't quite understand it. But it's there. And you've got it. And I mean to have *you*. You'll be a mighty big asset for me. I'm in this sport for keeps. And I'm surrounded by a bunch of crooks. If ever I'm to get anywhere in the collie game, I've got to have a kennel manager who is working for his own honesty and whiteness, before he's even working for Rufus G. Belden. I——"

He paused and looked a shade less cock-sure than was his habit. Then, as ever, he branched off on a new tack.

"Lochinvar Bobby will still be yours," said he.

"But, for shows, he'll be a Mackellar-Belden dog; independent of the kennels. We are going to show him, as partners, each standing half the expense and splitting the profits the same way. And——"

"Bobby lad!" yelled Jamie with sudden noisy enthusiasm, as he flung the pistol out into the road and shook the collie with loving roughness by one shaggy shoulder. "Bobby, I'll bet a year's pay the Mackellar-Belden entry will keep Ulrich's dog from getting his championship; till he's so old they'll have to ship him to shows in sections. I—I wish I hadn't given you all that fine steak. Lord, but I'm hungry! And cold bread-and-milk is no sort of celebration-supper for a five-thousand-a-year man!"

CHAPTER IV: FALSE COLORS

SO it was that, when Jamie Mackellar accepted the $5,000 job as kennel-manager for Rufus G. Belden,—richest and noisiest magnate in Midwestburg,—he took Bobby along; but not as a member of the far-famed Beldencroft Collie Kennels.

This was as well. For, all the cash coined and all the transfer papers in existence could not have made Bobby anybody's dog but Mackellar's. Every man with money enough may become the *owner* of a collie. But nobody can become his *master,* except with the adoring consent of the collie himself. And Jamie Mackellar was Bobby's master.

Life was monstrous pleasant for Bobby and for Mackellar at the Beldencroft Kennels. The collie lived as an honored inmate of his master's cottage; and not in the kennels with the fifty-four registered dogs of Belden's string.

Now and again, he would be taken, with a group of these dogs, to some show; and there he would come in for an inordinate share of praise and prizes. But, for the rest, he was Jamie's chum and housemate.

PUBLIC LIBRARY

One January, Mackellar took five of the Beldencroft collies to a show in Southern Michigan. It was a by-show, and Bobby was not entered for it.

"Stay on the works, here, Bobby, lad," adjured Jamie, as he departed. "I'll be back in a couple of days. If Mistress hadn't gone on that visit to Granny, you could stay on in the house, like always, Bobby. But the house'll be empty. And that means you'll have to stay in the kennels. You'll be taken care of, grand. So don't mope or haver over it."

Bobby, with head on one side, listened gravely to his master's oration. Apart from its repetition of his own name, he did not understand one word in six. But he understood every faintest inflection of the crooning voice. And that voice was mildly sorrowful. Wherefore, Bobby sorrowed. For Mackellar's joys and woes were also his.

He sorrowed still more, when Jamie whistled him into the kennels, and put him in the largest and most comfortable of the huts there; a hut with a fifty-foot run and with a deep bed of cedar shavings.

Stooping over and petting him, Mackellar bade him good-by; and departed, locking the hut door behind him.

Jamie was in his dogshow clothes. That meant

he was going away. He was going away;—and he was not taking his chum along. It was the first time, since he had come back from forest life, that Bobby had been separated from his master. He could not understand it. But it grieved his abnormally sensitive feelings. It grieved them, bitterly.

He went out into the run, and stared through the wire meshes at a vanishing truck. In the body of the truck were five dog-crates. On the seat, beside the driver, was Jamie Mackellar.

Yes, there could be no doubt about it. Jamie was going away. And he had forgotten to take Bobby along.

The collie sat down, and lifted his pointed muzzle heavenward. For a half-mile in every direction echoed his long-drawn wolf-howl of utter misery.

Two kennel men came running. They spoke in friendly fashion to the deserted collie. One of them offered him a slice of raw sirloin. Ordinarily, this would have been a delicious treat to Bobby. Now, it was not even worthy of a sniff or a glance. Nor did he propose, in his present mood, to listen to the clucking allurements of any mere kennel-men.

He strode back into the hut and stretched his tawny body out at full length on the fragrant cedar-shavings bed. There he lay; his classic

head between his little white forepaws; his deep-set dark eyes abrim with grief.

Nor, that evening, would he touch his supper; though it was a far more tempting meal than ever was served to the rank-and-file of the Beldencroft collies. A meal including canned salmon and others of his favorite foods. The kennelmen were worried. So was the awe-inspiring Rufus G. Belden, himself. The magnate deigned to come to the hut, in person, at bedtime; on receiving his kennelmen's report; and to try to rouse the dog from his apathy of woe.

Little by little, as the evening wore on, the queer reasoning powers of a collie came to Bobby's aid. Jamie was gone. Then there was but one thing to do; Bobby must go and find him. It was all very simple. And at once the dog's mind was made up.

Being wise, and having learned the craft of the Wild, he did not bark or scratch to be set free. Instead, he lay, moveless, waiting for Chance to release him. And, Chance,—as usual when one has the watchful patience to await her moods,—came to his rescue.

When Rufus G. strolled down to the kennels for a look at Bobby, he brought along a lump of sugar and a handful of animal crackers,—two of Bobby's best loved, if least healthful, dainties.

Opening the hut's door, and chirping encourag-

ingly to its occupant, Rufus G. advanced a step into the room; turning his flashlight on, to locate Bobby. He located the dog with no trouble at all. He located him, definitely, even if fleetingly. He could have done so as readily, in the dark.

For, at the first forward step of Rufus G., Bobby lowered his head and charged through the half-open door with the speed and deadly accuracy of a tawny thunderbolt. The massive and slightly parted legs of Rufus G. were directly between Bobby and the door. And through this aperture tore the dog.

Rufus G. had his left foot slightly advanced and an inch or so off the floor, at that juncture. His balance was practically nil. It proceeded to become far niller.

Bobby dashed out, with the speed of an express train; and on to completer liberty. Jamie Mackellar was gone. And Jamie Mackellar's dog was going in quest of his master.

Down the driveway the big collie galloped; nose to ground; every muscle astrain.

A telephone message from the kennels had just warned the estate's night watchman to close the gates; as Lochinvar Bobby had run away and must be prevented from getting out into the high-road.

The ornate iron gates, where the drive met the road, clanged shut; when through the gloom

came speeding a low dark shape. The watchman ran out into the drive to intercept Bobby. The dog eluded him with entire ease and made for the gates. Luckily—or unluckily—these were only a little more than five feet in height. Without breaking his stride, Bobby calculated the distance; and tensed his muscles for the leap.

He rocketed through the air; clearing the fringe of sharp iron points, on the gates' top, by an inch or more, and landing in a scrambling heap in the highway outside.

The watchman ran to the gates and unfastened them; bawling to the collie as he did so. But Bobby was clean out of sight, down the road.

That was how Champion Lochinvar Bobby chanced to be lost. That was how Rufus G. Belden happened to put a display advertisement into every Midwestburg newspaper, next morning, offering a reward of $250 for the priceless collie's return.

Now if this advertisement had not been inserted, our story would not have needed telling. For that same advertisement would not have been read at breakfast next morning by Lucius Frayne, Bobby's breeder, who was at the Southern Michigan dogshow with several of his Lochinvar Kennels' lesser dogs.

Frayne read the advertisement. Then he ran his eye over the rest of the Midwestburg paper

he had bought in the hotel lobby on his way to the breakfast room. There he found a brief news item, telling of Bobby's loss; and of Mackellar's absence from home, at the time.

Now Lucius Frayne was a practical man. Seldom did he allow himself the luxury of hatred. But the case of Lochinvar Bobby and Jamie Mackellar was an exception. Frayne hated Jamie, as one hates a man one has swindled. He hated him tenfold more because the dog he had sold Mackellar had turned out to be not a mutt, but a champion.

Frayne had bred Bobby. Then, because the pup seemed so utterly worthless and because Jamie had been dazzled by the fame of the Lochinvar Kennels, he had sold Bobby to him, sight unseen, for $150. And now the dog was worth more than fifteen times that money.

Frayne's two chief ambitions (at such rare times as he allowed daydreams to seep into his practical brain) had been to own Bobby again—fifty per cent the best dog he ever had been able to breed—and to see Jamie Mackellar drown or burn to death or go to jail for life. And one aspiration had been as likely of fulfillment as the other. At least, so it had seemed until now. Until now——.

Frayne sent a bellboy to hunt up his kennel manager, Perry Roke.

Roke had been with Frayne for nearly twelve years. The two were admirably suited, in character, one to the other. They had been parted but once. That had been when Rufus G. Belden had lured Roke away, with a bigger salary and with better chances for personal graft. But when Rufus G. had discharged him for crookedness and had put Jamie Mackellar in his place, Roke had gravitated quite naturally back to his olden employer.

To-day the two spent a half minute in reading and rereading the advertisement; and a half hour in talking it over. After which, Roke left the hotel and the town; barely in time to catch the 10 A. M. train for Midwestburg. This, after he had glanced in at the just-open dogshow and had seen the unconscious Jamie Mackellar busily grooming the Beldencroft entries for the coming ring-ordeal.

Jamie had not read the Midwestburg papers, that morning; and a sixty-word telegram from Rufus G., addressed to him in care of the show's superintendent, still lay amid a heap of other unsorted envelopes on that overbusy functionary's desk.

Lochinvar Bobby, meanwhile, had been having a wretched time.

Once clear of the Beldencroft gates, he sped

down the road for a furlong; nose to ground; in eager quest for some faintest trace of his master's scent. He was not familiar with the truck which had carried the crated dogs to the station. Thus he could not detect its tires' scent from those of fifty other cars which had passed and repassed along that well-traveled road.

At the end of some two hundred yards or so, the dog wavered in his loping run and came to a halt. With less eagerness, but with a pitiful wistfulness, he retraced his way.

As he neared the Beldencroft gates, he saw lights dancing and heard excited voices. Running as noiselessly as one of his wolf ancestors, Bobby detoured the spot, just beyond the radius of light, and struck the highroad again, fifty yards farther on.

He had explored this road in one direction and had drawn blank. Now he was minded to course it in the opposite. And at the end of the first hundred yards he struck a clue.

The clue was nothing more dramatic than the chewed stub of a cigar which Jamie had cast away. To a dog, tobacco is one of the most loathed of all scents. It causes physical pain to his supersensitive nostrils. Yet, at this poignantly distasteful cigar butt, lying at the side of the highroad, Lochinvar Bobby sniffed long and earnestly.

The reek of it nauseated him. Yet, at its less abhorrent end, strong and unmistakable, was the loved scent of Jamie Mackellar; a scent as familiar to Bobby as his own name.

Jamie had passed this way. Therefore, it was along this direction of the road his dog must seek him. Bobby broke again into a sweeping gallop; nostrils still close to the ground.

Beldencroft stood on the summit of Crescent Hill; overlooking the big black city of Midwestburg. The road, which passed the estate, ran from far out in the open country, to the edge of the city itself. And it was toward the city that Lochinvar Bobby was making his way.

Silent, furtive, swift, he galloped on; swerving now and then as the lights of a belated car turned the black road into momentary dazzle; but always swinging back again, the instant the way was clear.

Presently, the ill-lighted residence suburb was passed; and the worse-lit straggling outskirts of the city were reached. Here, Bobby made his first halt.

He stopped, because he had come to a railroad track; and because a train was just puffing out of the branch station. As he stood waiting for the long cars to file past him and leave the road free, a motorcycle stopped, just behind him; also waiting for the train to pass. To avoid this chug-

ging and ill-smelling vehicle, Bobby moved to one side. At once he became alert in every inch of his mighty frame.

The move had brought him to the edge of the branch station's wooden platform. And on the moist boards of the platform he caught the trail of Jamie Mackellar's footsteps. Here had stood and walked Jamie, while waiting for the train that was to take him and the crated dogs to the show, seventy miles away.

And now the whole mystery was as plain as day to Bobby. More than once had Jamie brought him to this branch station; and had sat in the baggage car with him as they journeyed to some show. Jamie had been here, again. His scent proved that. He must be on the train which was just pulling out!

Bobby dashed frantically after the departing cars. He made a tremendous spring, to gain the rear platform of the last of them. He missed it by the fraction of an inch; lost his balance and rolled over and over between the rails.

In a second he was on his feet again. Head down, he set off in pursuit of the train;—the train which, presumably, was carrying his worshipped master away from him. But the second of time he had lost was just the second needed to make futile his chase.

Twice, before the engine struck its forty-mile

clip, Bobby ranged alongside that elusive rear platform; and launched himself in air, in a mad effort to land upon it. Both times he missed his footing on the fast-moving steps; and fell to the ground. The second time he landed on his head, against one of the rails; and lay there for a few moments, stunned.

As he staggered to his feet, he saw the red tail-light of the platform was despairfully far away; and that the train had gathered speed. Stubbornly, he set off in its wake; with what agility his jarred body could compass. He was not following a mere line of cars. He was following his dear master.

A galloping collie can hold his own, for a brief space, alongside a fast-moving train. But not even a collie,—and no other dog but a greyhound is so fleet,—can continue the flying pace for any length of time.

Yet Lochinvar Bobby did his best. He ran until his breath was torture;—until his heart was hammering agonizingly against his ribs; until cinders and sparks had stung his eyes to anguish.

Even when his speed flagged, he kept on. Even when at last the red tail-light was a mere speck and then vanished altogether, he kept on. It was an easy trail to follow. Not only by the rails; but by the coal-and-cinder smell of the tracks.

The ties hurt his cinder-cut feet. So presently,

without pausing, he moved to one side of the right-of-way and onto the far more comfortable footing of the wayside dead grass. This, as it happened, was fortunate. For, an hour later, it saved Bobby from being ground to death under the wheels of the mail-train which came along the single-track line in the wake of the cars Bobby was following.

It was the passing of this second train that made Bobby give up his crazy pursuit. Whether he reasoned that his master could not be on both of these and perhaps was not on either, or whether the coming of the second one between him and his quarry discouraged him—he slumped to a shuffling walk, and then, stumblingly, lay down to rest.

He was fagged out. He was bruised and battered. He was sore in every joint. It had been a fearful run. And his falls from the platform steps had shaken and weakened him. He had eaten nothing, all day. The dog lay on his side and panted. Presently, through grief and utter exhaustion, he slept.

It was five o'clock in the chill winter morning when a section gang in a handcar, on their way home from the night shift, found him. Several trains had passed, in the meantime. But Bobby, knowingly subconsciously that they were no concern of his, had not paid their passing the tribute of a single open eye.

He was dead-tired. And Nature teaches her children that heavy sleep is the one sure cure for such fatigue. Dogs and other so-called lower animals have the wit to profit by this.

Moreover, Bobby was not on guard. This was not his home. He was thirty miles away from his home—which was no longer home to him, now, that Jamie Mackellar had departed out of it. And he had no responsibilities here. He could sleep; undeterred by any notions of duty.

The handcar's lantern shed a fitful light on the great slumbering collie, so close to the right of way.

"Huh!" speculated the section-gang foreman. "Another critter killed by the road. That'll likely mean a damage soot if the owner finds him there in the morning. Stop! Back her up! Two of you go and load him on here. We'll drop him into the river, next trestle we cross."

Two of the section hands made their way to where Bobby slept. At sound of their footsteps drawing near, the dog lifted his tired head a few inches. Then, drowsily he got up, and stood blinking into the lantern-flare.

"The cuss was just taking a nap!" exclaimed the foreman. "Gee, but he's a beaut! One on each side of him, boys! Nab him, before he has a chance to make a getaway. A fine big dog, like

that, is worth ten or fifteen dollars. We may as well get it as any one. Bring him along."

The two laborers made a simultaneous grab for the collie. Bobby was not used to being grabbed at by strangers. He showed his resentment by taking a backward step, out of their reach. One of the two men, in zeal to make a hit with his foreman, threw himself bodily on the dog, digging both hands into the shaggy coat.

He gained his hold with creditable quickness; thanks to Bobby's daze. But he relinquished it with even greater speed. For, with a single slash of the curved white eyetooth, Bobby laid open the palm of one clutching hand; and dived savagely for the face.

But the second laborer had more prudence; or perhaps more knowledge of dogs. As Bobby had arisen to his feet, this man had stepped back to the handcar and taken therefrom a burlap bag. As his colleague grabbed, the bag-wielder had made a cast for the collie's head. He missed the first cast; because the head was engaged in committing mayhem on the grabber. But, the second cast was more lucky.

Bobby suddenly felt his head and his mighty shoulders enveloped in an ill-smelling sack. He bit and writhed and fought. But he could not break free. The man was winding the slack of

the bag deftly about the plunging and snapping jaws.

Trussed up and impotent, he was lugged aboard the handcar. In another hour—still before sunrise—the car stopped at a mean wayside huddle of houses. Without removing the bag from his captive's head, the foreman propelled the ragingly resisting Bobby along, for perhaps two blocks; and deposited him at last in the back yard of a trackside hovel.

There, calling to his half-awake wife to fetch a rusty ox-chain from the cellar—a bit of treasure trove found along the right of way, months before—the foreman passed it around the dog's neck and anchored the other end to a back yard clothes-post. Then he ventured to remove the bag; and jumped back out of reach.

Having made secure his prize, the foreman went indoors for his usual half-day sleep. There would be time, later, to try to sell the savagely beautiful dog.

Now, when Perry Roke set out for Midwestburg, it was with a single idea—an idea which offered only about one chance in three of success. He remembered hearing that Bobby, in his ten-month period of forest-running, as a puppy, had used as a den a deserted dance pavilion in Blake's Woods, on the outskirts of the city. Under this

platform had the wild dog slept; when he was not foraging the farms or thickets for food.

Roke reasoned that the collie would be likely to return to his olden lair; now that he had gone back, apparently, once more to the Wild. And that was where Roke was going to look for him. To aid him, in the event of finding Bobby, he had brought along a club, a chain, a muzzle and a pair of thick gloves.

It had been no part of the Frayne-Roke plan to restore the lost collie to his master. They had worked out a far more profitable general scheme. It would be time enough to go into details, when Bobby should be once more back in the safety of the Lochinvar Kennels, a thousand miles to eastward.

Roke sat in the smoking car, gazing idly out at the rain-rotted winter fields and the squalid villages that the train crawled past. For this was an accommodation; not an express such as Bobby so valiantly and idiotically had pursued. It stopped at all manner of God-forsaken way-stations.

As the accommodation began to slacken its snailic pace for one of these, Roke sat up with galvanic suddenness; peering out of the window with more amazed interest than he would have lavished on the Grand Canyon and Niagara Falls combined.

In the unclean back yard of an unclean little trackside house, a collie was chained. Roke, with a true expert's eye, marveled, at first glance, to see so magnificent a thoroughbred in such a place. Then, on the instant, he recognized Lochinvar Bobby.

With a jump, Roke was making for the car-door; almost forgetting his handbag. He tumbled out of the train as it was drawing to a halt at the station-shack; and he started at a run toward the clump of huts that strung along the right-of-way.

But, just before he had reached the foreman's home, he loitered to a careless standstill in front of a group of unwashed children who were peering over a slab fence into the yard. Without following the direction of their round-eyed gaze at the fettered collie, he addressed one of the youngsters.

"Say, kid," he began, drawing a handful of loose change from his pocket. "I've lost my big brown dog. Haven't seen anything of a new dog, around here, have you?

The eyes of all the group were focused now on that fistful of small silver. A dozen grimy fingers pointed over the fence. A dozen raucous young voices piped forth the information he sought. In due amaze, Roke peeped over the fence.

"That's the one!" he cried excitedly. "That's the one! Thanks!"

With Monte Cristo lavishness he tossed the entire handful of coins on the muddy ground; for them to scramble for. Then he made for the unpainted front door of the hovel. A slatternly woman with an outthrust underjaw, answered his knock. After brief parley, the foreman—frowsy, red-eyed, barefoot, clad in undershirt and trousers,—came forth to meet him.

"Morning!" hailed Roke. "My big brown dog slipped his collar, last night; way up the line, yonder. Some kids told me I'd find him here. And I did. Thanks for taking care of him for me. It's worth exactly $25 to me to have the big feller back."

He pulled out his wallet, as he talked. While the sleep-muddled foreman was still trying to find words, wherein to explain his possession of the dog or to hold out for higher reward, Roke handed two tens and a five to the slatternly woman in the doorway.

Roke was a reader of character. And, wisely, he gave the money to the actual head of the house, rather than to its nominal lord. The wisdom of his action was proved. The foreman glowered and then sputtered, forbiddingly:

"Hold on, there! I——"

"Shut up, Mort!" adiured the woman. "It's

all right. Let the gentleman have his dog. The price is right. And even if it wasn't, he's got the law with him. Shut up!"

Into the garbage-strewn back yard she piloted Roke, her husband muttering along in her wake. The kennel-manager stepped up, in friendly but incisive fashion, to where Bobby strained dumbly at his bonds. Pocketing collar and muzzle and chain, Roke extended his left hand. Then, as the hand all-but touched Bobby's nose, he moved it sharply to the left.

Instinctively Bobby's head followed the abrupt leftward motion. And Roke's right hand caught him expertly by the ruff, just behind the ear.

In a second, the muzzle was slipped over the snarling jaws; and the collar and chain were in place. Then, tugging at the braced-back collie, Roke started out of the yard with him.

"Kind of funny he ain't gladder to see you; if he's your dog!" commented the foreman, sourly.

"Why would he be glad?" retorted the kennel manager. "He didn't get to my place, from Oregon, till yesterday. I shut him up in my hencoop for the night; and he jumped out through the window. He never set eyes on me till yesterday. The feller I got him off of wrote me he was ugly with strangers. Say, I wonder can I hire a flivver to take me home? I'll pay well. There ain't another train, till Lord-knows-when."

Following the slatternly woman's voluble directions, he made his way to the house of the settlement's plutocrat; farther down the right-of-way. There, he engaged the services of a battered and ancient-vintage Ford car and of a boy to drive it.

Fifteen miles to westward, he and the rebellious Bobby boarded a train on a line paralleling the one going to Midwestburg. One more change of cars and they were safely on their way East. A telegram, from a way-station, informed Lucius Frayne:

"*We* are starting for home."

Frayne, leaving his dogs to the care of a local handler, followed by the next train.

He arrived at the Lochinvar Kennels, to find Bobby installed in a stout enclosure; whose sheep-wire ran seven feet above ground and two feet below. The dog was lying in one corner of this pen; moodily refusing to eat or to notice anyone. He greeted Frayne's too-close approach with a wild-beast snarl.

Bobby was hideously unhappy. Not only was his great heart broken by separation from Jamie; but the events of the past two days had ripped his nerves and temper to shreds. Roke had not treated him with active unkindness. Yet he had let the dog feel the indignity of his position in a way that rankled unspeakably.

"Well," said Frayne, after a long and placidly triumphant glance at the prisoner. "We've got him. What's next? I've got a bunch of schemes, besides the ones you and I talked over, out West. But the more I think of them, the more holes there seem to be in them all. Got any good ideas?"

"One," replied Roke. "Only one. But that one is enough and plenty. And it's holeproof. It's a gold mine."

"Cut loose!" ordered Frayne, as Roke made a dramatic pause.

"Poor Lochinvar Gavin's dead," said the kennel manager, with seeming irrelevancy. "He was ailing, you'll remember, when we left. He died, last night. I buried him deep. He——"

"What's that got to do with Bobby, here?" snapped Frayne, impatiently. "Gavin never amounted to the price of his registration. He's no loss. He was the most promising tricolor, at five months, I ever had. And at six months—after that fire-engine cut his tail off in the middle and lamed his hip for life—he wasn't worth a plugged nickel. I was a fool not to shoot him, instead of waiting for some sucker to come along and buy him as a stud. We never had an offer for him. So what's all this sadness about your burying him and——?"

"I'm not sad," denied Roke. "I'm just kind of

astonished. That's all. I buried poor Lochinvar Gavin, last night. Yet there he stands, to-day. You may think that's Lochinvar Bobby. It ain't. It's Lochinvar Gavin."

Frayne stared at his kennel manager, in crass bewilderment. Roke went on:

"Last night, I made out a post entry for the Westminster Show. It was the last day post entries could be sent. I entered Lochinvar Gavin for 'Novice' and 'Limit' and 'Open, Tricolor' and 'Americanbred.' He's a surprise we've been holding back, till he was right. I-——"

"Are you drunk?" babbled Frayne.

"No such luck. I'm telling you this is Lochinvar Gavin; and registered with the A.K.C. as such, at the age of five months. And he's never been shown before. So in he goes as a Novice and——"

"You wall-eyed idiot!" roared Frayne. "Bobby's known by sight to a hundred people who'll be at Westminster. Why, you told me, yourself, Mackellar had entered him for this year's show, there! You said he told you Bobby was the only dog in good enough coat, just now, for them to bring all the way to New York. Show him at Westminster? Do you hone for jail or are you just laying pipes for a padded cell in the foolish-house? We couldn't show him, as Gavin, or as any other dog. Besides,—Gavin was a tricolor.

And he was registered as a tricolor. Bobby's a dark sable-and-white. He——"

"Just because Bobby's a sable, to-day," said Roke, quietly, "is no reason why he'll be a sable, ten days or even ten hours from now. Bobby's going to be a tricolor. The finest tricolor in America, at that."

Lucius Frayne looked long and open-mouthed at his manager. Then, feebly, he mumbled:

"It can't be done! You could never fake that coat, till it looked like——"

He stopped speaking and gazed with renewed interest at Roke. The manager had taken off his cap and was stroking contemplatively his shining black shock of hair.

Frayne remembered, now, hearing more than once a rumor that the inky-haired man was not less than sixty-four years old; and that he was absurdly sensitive as to his age. On the strength of that glossy black head of hair, Frayne had never before credited the gossip. He gasped aloud, as Roke's plan blazed in upon his lively imagination.

"Six bottles ought to do it," the kennel manager was ruminating aloud. "Eight, at most. But it costs a lot; the right stuff does. And the other kinds crock or turn green. Hold on a minute."

He went to an outhouse; opened its door and

whistled. Out bounded a stunningly handsome tricolor pup.

"That's Lochinvar Patrician," explained Roke. "I practiced it out on him, yesterday. Worked three hours over him; and then again early this morning. Patrician was a sable; the nearest of any of ours to Bobby's shade. And look at him now. Rub your hands in his coat. You'll see it's fast color."

"Good Lord!" exulted Frayne; converted in one surging instant, as he ran his fingers through the pup's shimmering black fur. "It's a clean-up! Unless there's something bigger at Westminster than I've seen at any show this winter. Bobby's going through his classes like a drunken longshoreman through a week's pay. If he acts savage or queer, in the ring, it'll be because the good old Novice has never been in public, before. And a couple of pills will make him show like a veteran. He'll sweep the whole shooting match. There and everywhere else. He'll win a championship in three shows, with any luck."

"That's how I figure it," assented Roke. "Three five-point shows will do it, New York, Boston, Philadelphia or maybe Chicago. If——"

"Then we'll take him to the Interstate Collie Club's big show in April," chuckled Frayne. "There are fatter cash specials and more cash specials there than at any other specialty show,

nowadays. It's the best show of the lot, too. Why, Bobby's due to be a gold mine! Buy a million gallons of the dye, if you want to. I'll pay."

"And Mackellar won't be at Westminster," pursued Roke, "for he wasn't entering any dog there but Bobby. And if he was, he could never guess; even if he examined the collie, inch by inch. A sable can't turn into a tri. Besides, Gavin was old Lochinvar King's son;—Bobby's own half-brother. That'll account for any family likeness."

"Roke," burbled Frayne, "*I* was the wall-eyed idiot. Not you. Go to it!"

Of collies,—apart from the "white" variety, which are oftener kept as magnificently handsome pets than as show-dogs,—there are three sorts;—the merle (gray-and-white-and-tan); sables (including all shades of yellow or of brown), and tricolors.

These last are black-and-white-and-tan. The chests and forepaws and underbodies and tail-tips of tricolors are white. There is a trace of tan on cheeks and eyebrows and sometimes on the legs or elsewhere. All the rest of a tricolor's body is jet black.

Thus, by dyeing black the tawny portion of Bobby's coat, and leaving splashes of the original hue to represent the tan sections of a tricolor, the disguise was perfect. But the dyeing was a ter-

rific task, even when the rebellious collie was muzzled and tied down.

Jamie Mackellar came back to Midwestburg, to a house left unto him desolate. And for a solid week, he searched the woods, for miles in every direction. Well he knew Bobby would never have deserted him; but that the dog was away looking for his master. From his own savings Jamie doubled Belden's $250 reward-offer. He was sick with lonely misery at the loss of his chum.

But rewards and detectives alike failed to glean any clue. If the section-gang foreman, forty miles distant, possessed the effete accomplishment of reading, then either he did not chance to read the papers of so far-off a city or else he failed to glance over the Lost and Found columns.

Dully heartsick, desperately lonely, Jamie took up again his duties as kennel manager.

Drearily, one evening, in his deserted cottage, he picked up and glanced over the copy of *Field & Fancy* which had come by that day's mail. He scanned idly its pages which usually held so much keen interest for his dog-loving soul. Then, midway in the "Collie Gossip" column, he came upon an item; which he read, and at once read a second time.

After which, he sat for a few minutes in wrinkle-browed thought. Presently, he went to

the telephone and called up Rufus G. Belden's house. When the magnate was summoned to the phone, Jamie asked with a queer little thread of excitement in his gentle voice:

"Didn't you tell me one of your pups was run over by a car, sir, when Roke was handling the kennels for you?"

"Why, yes," replied Belden, not getting the drift of the query. "Why?"

"Didn't you tell me," pursued Jamie, his voice quavering oddly, like that of a dog on the trail, "didn't you tell me Roke said it was only the second time such a thing had happened to him in all his years as a kennel boss?"

"H'm," reflected Belden, probing his memory. "Why, yes, I believe he did. Why? Has one of our dogs been run over?"

"No, sir. But—for the Lord's sake, think hard, sir!—didn't he tell you that that one other dog was Lochinvar Gavin—a pup of Mr. Frayne's? You told me about it, when I came here first. I remembered the name, because it's the same as my father's,—Gavin. A tricolor pup you told me he said it was. Can't you remember, sir? We were out by the——"

"I—I rather think that was the name," said Belden; adding fretfully, "but if that's why you called me away from my dinner——"

"It wasn't, sir," disclaimed Jamie. "Just listen

to this, from *Field & Fancy*:—'Mr. Lucius Frayne promises collieites a surprise at Westminster, with his big tricolor, Lochinvar Gavin. This splendid dog is a son of Champion Lochinvar King and is a half-brother to the still more renowned Lochinvar Bobby, whose loss was recently reported. Gavin has never been shown, before. Mr. Frayne says he has waited till he was "just right," before flashing him on the fancy.'"

"Well, what of that?" asked Belden, unimpressed.

"The A.K.C. law won't let two dogs be registered by the same kennel under the same name," explained the thrilled Jamie. "Not without a numeral after the name of the second one. Gavin was run over. Yet here Gavin is to be shown. I—I've got a hunch——"

"You don't mean there's a Chinaman's chance that—that——? Why, man, it's a tricolor!"

"We Scots get hunches," insisted Jamie. "I don't say there's anything queer or that it's any of my business. But I know Frayne and we both know Roke. They were West, last week. I only say, will you let me start to-night for New York? At that, I can't hope to get to the Westminster Show, before the collie judging begins. It always starts about eleven on the first morning. But I——"

"Oh, trot up here and talk over the silly idea with me!" grunted Belden. "Only, don't expect me to play your hunch."

A Canadian was to judge collies, at Westminster Show, that February. His train from Toronto was late. He did not enter the ring at Madison Square Garden, to face an unusually large Male Puppy class, until nearly half-past eleven.

He was a painstaking judge; and it was his first engagement in New York. Wherefore, he worked with methodical slowness; weeding out the large class of furry youngsters in deliberate fashion; giving an inordinate amount of time to each.

The railbirds fidgeted. At this rate, the collie judging would last on, until after dark. Finally, the four ribbons were awarded. The steward chalked on the board: "Novice Class" and the runner hurried down the double line of collie benches, bawling the Novice numbers.

At the same moment, a taxi disgorged at the Garden's yellow-brick colonnade, a cinder-spattered little man who dived into the building at a dead run; stopping only to throw down the money for a ticket and then to snatch a catalog, as he sped past. Without checking his run, down

the aisles, he opened and riffled the pages of the gray-backed catalog in an ardent search.

Finding the number he sought, and finding then the bench corresponding to it, he discovered the bench was empty. And he bolted for the ring; scattering idlers and railbirds as he went.

Into the ring filed four collies; besides three of the puppy class which had remained there. The Canadian judge eyed them with no optimism. For, "Novice" is the hardest and most mixed class to adjudicate. It contains everything from riff-raff to future champions. More of the former than of the latter.

Yet, from out this mixed collection, to-day, stood a mighty and magnificent tricolor; a dog such as is seen at not one show in seven. And the eyes of the judge were riveted on him in open wonder.

Lochinvar Bobby, still sullen and heartbroken, stalked into the ring with visible reluctance, under convoy of Perry Roke. His new tricolor coat was glorious in its quantity and sheen and texture. His perfect build and carriage were a delight.

Here, if anywhere on earth, was championship timber. And the close-packed railbirds marveled that so astute a dogman as Frayne should have kept this world-beater in seclusion. It did not make sense to them.

"All in!" announced the steward.

"Walk your dogs, please!" commanded the judge, moving to the ring's center.

Around the edges of the ring paraded the seven entrants, led by their handlers. But before the orderly procession had finished the first half of the first lap, a shrill and almost tearful voice, from just outside the gate, clamored forth:

"Bobby! *Bobby,* lad!"

The stately parade lost form and order, in a flash. It lost them, because the great tricolor gave a half-human cry of rapture; and bounded madly in the direction of the call.

Perry Roke went green-white. But he kept his head. Viciously he yanked at Bobby's leash.

"Back here, Gavin!" he thundered; tugging with all his might.

Bobby, springing to full length of the leash, felt himself hauled back. This man at the other end of the silken cord was trying to keep him away from his restored god. With lightning speed, Bobby swirled about and slashed. It was a maneuver worthy a battling timber-wolf, for swiftness and for murderous skill.

The saber-tooth found its mark; before Roke, with all his experience and cunning, could remember to guard it. The kennel manager's forearm was cut, as by a knife, from elbow to wrist.

Instinctively, as he recoiled from the fury of

hat onslaught, Roke loosened his hold on the eash. This was all Bobby wanted him to do. In he same second, the giant collie had broken loose rom the scandalized parade and was flinging his eautiful body forward at the gate.

Before he could reach it, a little red-faced man ad plowed his way past the barrier of railbirds nd had found and opened the gate's latch.

At Jamie Mackellar's first step into the ring, a haggy black-and-white-and-tan shape flung itelf on his chest;—screaming, sobbing, whining, arking,—all in one crazily vibrant medley of cstasy.

Forgetful of his own Scottish reserve, forgetul of his surroundings, forgetful of everything xcept that he had found the dog he loved—Jamie lung both arms around the writhingly shaggy orm; squeezing the enraptured collie to his puny hest; and gasping incoherently, as he broke into shambling dance:

"Bobby! Oh my bonny old dog! Where've ye een, the while, laddie?—And what've ye done o your sonsie sable coat?—But I knew you! I new you! The minute I looked into your face, on, I *knew* you!—There's no such look to any ther dog's face. Yes, and I knew the rest of ou, for all your color!—Just as right as you'd now *me* in a new suit of clothes, Bobby, lad!— Who'll laugh, next, at a Scotchman's hunch?"

The ring and the railbirds were in a tumult. Dogs and handlers and officials converged in a dumfounded rush on the blitheringly blissful little man and his shriekingly and sobbingly delirious collie.

Now, Perry Roke was a rarely gifted scoundrel. His worst enemy had never doubted the fellow's pluck and resourcefulness. He strode up to the gyrating pair, shouting, as he nursed his bleeding forearm:

"Mr. Mackellar, I'll thank you to let go of that dog of mine! Judge, you'll bear witness this man has no right in the ring! You'll bear witness he called my own dog away from me, while I was showing! If *that's* not a case for the A.K.C., then——"

The judge had bustled angrily across to the interrupter of his judicial work. Now, recognizing Jamie as an old friend and a famous collie man, he hesitated. The steward, officiously, made his way out of the ring, and ran off in search of the show's superintendent.

"Mr. Mackellar," began the judge, sternly, breaking in on Roke's appeal, "this is very strange conduct for a man of your standing. May I ask why you have——?"

"D'you mean to say you don't recognize Lochinvar Bobby?" shrilled Mackellar, whirling on his questioner. "You that gave him Winners and

Best of Breed at Midwestburg; and again at——"

"What are you talking about?" demanded the amazed judge. "Bobby is a sable. This——"

"Yes, and Bobby might as well say you're not the same judge he showed under, at Midwestburg!" interposed Jamie, "because, that day you wore brown tweeds; and you're wearing a black suit, to-day. You're a collie judge; and yet it fooled you? Why, use your own good eyes man! He——"

"Judge!" insisted Roke, loudly, his sweating face like a corpse's. "Will you make that maniac give me back my collie? He——"

"Give him back to you, is it?" flamed Mackellar, facing Roke for the first time. "Give him back to *you,* eh? To you who stole him and faked him into a tricolor and then didn't have the horse sense to let good enough alone, but had to spoil your own game by writing that brag for *Field & Fancy;* and putting me on the track? Give him back to you, eh? That I will, man! . . . Judge, I'm asking you to do a new kind of judging, for a minute. The catalog will tell you the dog was whelped and raised in the Lochinvar Kennels. That means Roke has handled him, from birth. I can prove I've never set foot in the Lochinvar Kennels. So, if he's Gavin, he never set eyes on me before. Now, then!"

He stepped back, a pace, from Bobby; who had

ceased gyrating for joy and had sunk to his master's feet, quivering and sobbing, his classic head on Jamie's muddy boot.

"Bobby, boy!" called Mackellar.

Scarce waiting the command, Bobby was beside him.

"Give me my handkerchief, Bobby, lad," said Mackellar, "and then my tobacco pouch. You ken well where they live."

On the instant, Bobby's nose had plunged into Mackellar's coattail pocket. Between daintily gentle jaws he was fishing forth a crumpled bandanna. Thrusting this into his master's hand, he reached into a side trouser pocket and began to haul out by its faded string a greasy tobacco pouch.

"So!" exulted Jamie, his high voice scaling above the sudden clangorous murmur from the throng of onlookers. "Now then, Bobby, boy, yon pillar of honesty says you're his. And he wants me to give you to him. *Go* to him, Bobby, lad!"

A sharp, pointing gesture went with the sharper mandate. Bobby understood. Through the air he hurled himself. Down, under the crashing impact of his bulk, went Perry Roke. Jamie snapped his fingers. Bobby halted in his dive for the fallen man's throat and stood, one

oot on Roke's chest, his eyes fixed in eager in-
uiry on Mackellar.

"See?" orated Jamie, above the uproar. "I've
iven him to you, Roke! And now that you've
ot him, what are ye going to do with him? He's
vaiting orders. If he's *your* dog, give him those
rders. If he's mine, I'll be glad to give them to
im. And they'll be orders dealing with your
ying throat, my friend. Now, whose dog is he?
peak up before I tell him what to do next."

"It—it was all just a joke!" wept Roke, his
erve crumbling as he looked up at the menacing
rute above him. "Just a joke. A joke that——"

"A joke that'll bar you and your boss's kennels
rom all A.K.C. registration, from now till
loomsday," finished Jamie, in riotous good humor
nce more. "I'm thinking this settles my Lucius
Frayne score, for good and all."

Signalling the eager collie to his side, Mackellar
dded:

"Come on home, Bobby, lad. I'm wondering
ow in blue blazes I can de-tricolor you, without
having you. Home's the place for a disreputable
ld God-given turncoat like you! Come on!"

CHAPTER V: BOOTLEGERDEMAIN

THEY called it the Greased Road. Before July 1919 it had been known as the Hamburg Turnpike. It ran southwest from the Canadian border, for several hundred miles.

Here and there, on its smoothly twisting length, settlements were clumped or straggled. Incidentally, it wound along Crescent Hill, skirting the noisily black metropolis of Midwestburg.

It had once been a highway of much minor convenience, but of no special significance. Now, it had taken on a new and rather sinister importance. The countryside at large and the motor club signs still spoke of it as the Hamburg Turnpike. But an ever-increasing element, from Canada to Missouri, knew it as the Greased Road.

There was no more visible or tangible grease on its well-kept surface than automobiles spill on any other thoroughfare. But certain chauffeurs received $1.75 per mile for making long runs on it. Certain garages, along its course, received from $20 to $35 a night, or a day, for harboring and tending these chauffeurs' cars.

More than one village constable and crossroads

ıstice of the peace was refurnishing his home ıd buying a player-piano and a new set of din- ıg-room furniture, by reason of a mysteriously oubled income.

The long highway was greased with money; articularly in spots where untoward creaking ould have interfered with a flourishing industry. Along its undulating miles,—sometimes by day, ut oftener by night,—chugged heavily-laden rucks, driven by stone-faced men and piled with oxes and bales.

These bales and boxes were most distinctly abeled, for all to see. There was no mystery bout them. The legends: "Dominion Apple Cor- ɔration" and "Saskatchewan Canning Concern, Ltd.," and the like, were stenciled on their ex- posed sides; with vivid clearness. And the ve- icles themselves bore still more plainly the names nd stolid business addresses of their owners.

Sometimes, through the darkness, such heavy aden trucks or a line of from three to seven igh-powered motor cars would go roaring along he Greased Road, at hideous speed and showing llegally few lights. From the north they came; nd the night swallowed up their southward dash.

A like traffic prevailed on a score of other Greased Roads, leading from Canada, from Mexico, from Florida. The "greasing" of these housands of miles was a costly item. But the

consumer paid it all; the price of the commodity rising in direct ratio to every greased mile.

At the point where the Greased Road topped the summit of Crescent Hill—the most exclusive residence suburb of Midwestburg—stood the gorgeous estate of Rufus G. Belden, the region's chief politician-financier.

Well back from the ornate wrought-iron fence and its elaborate gates, across a swell of stage lawn, the house of Rufus G. upreared its $600,000 bulk. It was not a home. It was a Residence. Any one, with half an eye, could see that.

The architect, seemingly, had sought to graft the dream-glories of the Taj Mahal on the more practical groundwork of Buckingham Palace. If the resultant edifice had been built by a less inexhaustibly rich man, it must have won the nickname of "Belden's Folly." It was that sort of house.

At a respectful distance behind it was a garage stable which had the aspect of a dissolute Russian cathedral. To the left of this, was the most ornate and up-to-date group of kennel-buildings in America.

Here were housed the famed Beldencroft collies, the pride of Rufus G. Belden's heart. Here they were cared for by a staff of highly efficient and more highly paid collie experts; under command of soft-spoken little Jamie Mackellar.

Back of the kennels was the most unpretentious
ıd only homelike structure on the estate;—Jamie
ackellar's cottage. Here, with his big York-
ire wife and his two stocky children, dwelt the
tle Scotchman. Here, too—an honored member
the Mackellar family—dwelt Lochinvar Bob-
; the great collie who shared Jamie's hearth
ıd board and who gave to his diminutive master
blindly obedient adoration.

People had a way of liking Mackellar. Even
e awesome Rufus G. held him in queerly high
teem; and, after one or two useless attempts,
d ceased to try bullying him. He valued Jamie's
rvices unspeakably; and trusted him, alone, of
his employees. More and more did Belden rely
this gently fearless little man who neither
ttered nor robbed him.

On a morning in very early spring, Mackellar
ıished his round of the kennels. Bobby paced
ong beside him, on the tour of inspection; every
ıe of his classic head and shaggily tawny body
ɔrant with lofty contempt for these lesser dogs
his breed who must live in wire runs and con-
ete huts; instead of chumming with their master
did he. For, collies are born snobs.

As Jamie paused to give directions to one of
e kennel men, Bobby unbent so far as to sniff
tronizingly at a slender merle collie—one of
ven young dogs that had been turned out to-

gether, for the day, in a large enclosure. The merle had been thrusting his pointed nose through the wire loops; and Bobby touched the sniffing nostrils, inquiringly, with his own.

The temperamental merle snarled, at the unasked attention from a dog that was free while he himself was not. Not only did he snarl, but he snapped, in petty futility, at the receding muzzle.

Bobby drew back in icy disgust at such a display of ill-temper. He did not deign to return the snarl nor so much as to ripple his lion-like mane in menace. The merle was quite beneath his notice. He proceeded to prove it by giving the transgressor a look of contempt, and then turning slowly away.

Yet, the snub rankled, just a little. It was seldom that Bobby condescended to make overtures of friendliness; either to strange humans or to strange collies. And it was far seldomer that such overtures were rebuffed.

The offender needed punishment. Moreover, early spring had gotten into the great dog's blood and had wakened there the imp of mischief that never lies very deep below the surface in a collie's make-up.

Thus, even as Bobby turned away, he changed his stately walk for a wild gallop. Around and

around the big wire enclosure he frisked, at top speed; his plumed tail flying.

Now, as any collie-student knows, this was the very blackest affront he could possibly heap upon the merle and the rest of the run's occupants. It was bad enough to walk past their prison. But to gambol around and around it, in gay freedom, while they were captives, was the ultimate insult.

And in a fraction of a second the success of Bobby's prank was proven.

Every one of the seven dogs proceeded to go crazy. Barking, screaming, howling, they flung themselves at the wire barrier; following in a plangent rush the course of Bobby's playful gallop; splitting the morning air with a horrible cacophony of din.

"Quiet!" shrilled Jamie Mackellar, coming up at a trot, followed by two kennel men. "*Quiet,* there!"

The seven clangorous dogs ceased their wild din and came to a shambling halt; still whimpering and staring resentfully out at Bobby.

At his master's shouted command, Bobby had abandoned the provoking gallop. His deepset dark eyes a-twinkle, his head a little on one side, he stood gazing interestedly at Jamie who bore down upon him.

"It's all your fault, you old ruffian!" accused Jamie. "Don't go flattering yourself I don't

know it. I saw the whole thing. Are you a harum-scarum kittle-kattle six-month pup; or have you gone fey, Bobby, lad?"

For answer, Bobby wrinkled his nose backward in a grin that showed teeth and gums alike; and he came wriggling in conciliatory fashion up to Mackellar; gesticulating fervidly with one stiffly-outthrust white foreleg.

There was no fear in his placating manner. He knew perfectly well that Jamie was not displeased with him. But he also knew that he had been in mischief; and that it behooved him to make his peace. Mackellar rumpled the classic head in loving severity, grumbling:

"That's the collie of it! You never know when the oldest of 'em will turn puppy. Take shame to yourself for teasing those poor tykes, Bobby boy. Next time you do it, I'll leave you in there with 'em, for a while; just to show you how it feels to be in the hoosgow. . . . I'm off to the station, to see have those bales of cedar shavings come; and to pay for the new crates. Want to come along? Not that you deserve to."

At once, Bobby's mock contrition fell away from him, as by magic. While he read the tone, rather than the words, of Jamie's question, long experience told him it forecasted a walk. And, on the instant, he was dancing feverishly around the little man; careless now whether or not his

antics should rouse the kenneled dogs to frenzy.

Off, up the drive to the highroad, they started, Jamie swinging sturdily along; and Bobby dashing ahead and then back to his master's side a dozen times in as many hundred feet.

Once out on the turnpike, he steadied down to the behavior due the occasion. True, he trotted ahead or loitered to investigate interesting scents and sounds along the way. But, at the most distant approach of any motor car, he always dropped back to Jamie and walked soberly, close to the man's side, until the car had gone by. This he had learned to do, long ago; even as he had learned to abandon the forward or sideways excursions and to stay beside his master, as soon as the city streets were reached.

About a half-mile beyond the Beldencroft gates, a turn in the hillside road brought him in sight of a motor vehicle for which he did not drop back to Jamie's side. For this machine was standing still. It was a huge truck, empty except for a heap of tarpaulin on its tonneau floor. It was facing north; and had evidently come from Midwestburg or from some point to southward.

A tire puncture had brought its driver down from his seat. The man was replacing the deflated tire with one of five spares strapped under the tailboard. He was on his knees beside the car, hard at work.

Bobby trotted past him, with no great interest; but stopped presently and turned back. This because Jamie Mackellar had paused beside the busy mechanic.

Until Rufus G. had hired him as kennel manager, Jamie had made his living, first by driving another man's truck and later by a truck of his own. And several odd features of this truck in the road to-day had caught his notice.

The sweating driver glanced up from his tire-changing labors to see a small man and a large dog intently watching him. The driver had not the look of a bashful or self-conscious person. Yet, noting this interested inspection, he scowled. Indeed, he seemed thoroughly uncomfortable.

"Need any help?" Jamie opened the conversation, in his timid way.

"No," grunted the driver. "And I don't need any gallery, either. Move on, can't you?"

Jamie looked grieved at the rebuff. But his interest was greater than his shyness.

"I never saw such a heavy truck, before, with pneumatic tires," he said. "Except for carting explosives. It must be a big expense item, when you're deep-loaded. Of course, you can make lots better time. And you don't jounce so much. But the cost of all those spares——"

"Say!" exhorted the driver, getting truculently to his feet and revealing himself as something

like a head taller and forty pounds heavier than the little Scot. "Say, you mangy shrimp, I told you, once, to beat it. I'm telling you again. Next time, I'll start you on your way. Take the air!"

Jamie flushed. He was a peaceable and friendly chap. He did not like to be spoken to in this fashion. Far down under his friendliness, something hot began to stir.

"The road is public, neighbor," he said, gently. "If it riles you to be talked to, while you're working, I'll keep my mouth shut. But I'm an old time truckman. And this machine of yours has got some things about it that are new to me. By your leave I'll just walk around it and take a look or two. I won't meddle with anything."

The driver, after delivering his warning, had bent down over the almost-adjusted tire. To the first part of Jamie's reply, he had paid no heed at all. But now, as Mackellar took an inquisitive step nearer the truck, he got to his feet again and lurched threateningly forward.

Deftly, with his hamlike right hand, he grasped Jamie by the collar-back and spun him around, facing the city below.

"Walk!" he commanded, giving the amazed little man a forward shove.

Then, two things happened at the same time and with bewildering quickness.

Bobby, head turned, ears cocked, had been

listening to the colloquy. Skilled at reading the human voice, he disliked the tone of this sweating and malodorous stranger toward his little god. Yet, as Mackellar did not seem ruffled by it, Bobby saw no cause to interfere.

Now, however, something occurred that did not need any explanation or second thought. The driver had laid violent hands on Jamie. The collie's god was assailed. This called for swift vengeance. As the man gripped the Scot's coat collar, Bobby sprang for him.

Jamie, too, at the brutish contact, was galvanized into fury. Wriggling, eel-like, out of his coat, he spun about and smote upward, with all his wiry strength, at the driver's unprotected jaw.

Now Malachi Dorner was uncommonly handy with his fists. Also, as became a man of his trade, he was resourceful and plucky and of powerful physique. But, just now, his right hand was impeded by a suddenly-vacated coat and his left was far extended in a grab for that coat's elusive shedder. Moreover, attack was the last thing to have been expected from the meekly talkative and nosey little intruder whom he had sought to chastise.

Wherefore, Malachi Dorner was off guard. Wherefore, too, Malachi Dorner received on the jaw-point a scientific and fairly effective blow that set him rocking back on his heels.

At the same moment, seventy pounds of furry avalanche smote him on the upper chest. A double set of white fangs raked his red throat, dangerously, in a praiseworthy effort to reach the jugular.

Backward reeled Malachi Dorner, scrambling for his balance and flailing the empty air with his outflung arms.

Bobby, missing his mark, sprang again. The arm gripping Jamie's coat sought mechanically to fend him off. The coat was slashed from neck to waist by the snapping jaws; then was shaken aside as Bobby made a fresh dive for his master's assailant.

Jamie Mackellar, blind with rage, smote again for the heavy jaw of the giant who had so grossly assailed him. And again the blow landed. It landed at the same instant Bobby's flying bulk smote Dorner, amidships. And, this time, the dual impact sent him asprawl on his back.

The driver, bleeding from the flesh wounds in throat and arm, and jarred by the two jaw-smashes, prepared nevertheless to spring up and return to the fray. But Bobby whirled again at his throat; and the man shrank back. With one hand Dorner sought to thrust away the dog. With the other he reached for his hip pocket.

It was then Jamie noted for the first time that his chum was taking part in the battle. He

seized the collie by the ruff; as Bobby flashed past him in the throat-dive.

"Steady, Bobby, boy!" he quavered, tugging at the anger-scourged collie. "Steady, there! No one asked you to horn in. I'm none so old I can't fight my own fights. Keep back, you murderous idiot! Now then!" he shrilled, defiantly, at the prostrate Dorner, "Are you man enough to get up and finish it? Or have you maybe had all you can hold? Which'll it be?"

For answer, the driver tucked his ample feet under him; for the dual purpose of getting up and of launching himself at the belligerently dancing little Mackellar. But his warlike eye rested on Lochinvar Bobby;—tense, bulky, terrible—straining forward in his master's grasp. And, half-lying, half-squatting, Dorner wabbled irresolutely; his hand straying again to his hip.

One of the policemen from the Crescent Hill sub-station loafed into view, around a bend of the steep road. Dorner's hand left his hip. The patrolman came bustling up. The sound of his hurrying footsteps made Mackellar glance about.

And at once the two humans in the bellicose group proceeded to become normal and a trifle sheepish; as is the way of squabblers at sight of the police. Jamie relaxed his hold on Bobby's ruff; with a sharp command to the dog to come to heel. Dorner scrambled to his feet and re-

turned busily to his almost completed task of tire changing. The policeman loitered to an inquiring stop, alongside the three.

" 'S'matter?" he demanded, tersely.

"Nothing, sir," spoke up Dorner with cheery friendliness. "This gentleman's dog tried to take a nip at me; but he didn't land. His boss yanked him back; and I kind of slipped on—on the *grease*—and sat down. That's all."

As he prattled, he watched closely for any possible effect the mystic and slightly emphasized word, "grease," might have upon his hearer. But this was a city patrolman; not a rural constable. And, as the greased road merely skirted Midwestburg, there was no arrangement between the local police,—under a new reform administration,—and the professional runners of the road. Wherefore, the password made no sense at all. And Dorner was glad he had spoken so conciliatingly.

The bluecoat glanced for confirmation at Mackellar, whom he knew. Jamie nodded; his ancestral dread of the law visualizing police courts and a possible magistrate-order for Bobby's execution as a vicious dog.

"That was all, Of'cer," said he. "Only this feller misjudged Bobby wrong, in thinking the big dog tried to hurt him. It was only just Bobby's play, sir."

Now, the patrolman not only knew Jamie, but he knew Jamie was kennel manager for the august Rufus G. Belden; a magnate whose lightest word, in the right quarters, had sometimes sufficed to make or mar a policeman's record.

Urbanely, he smiled upon the fidgeting Mackellar. With almost a benediction he petted the unresponsive head of Lochinvar Bobby. He favored the disheveled Dorner with a cold stare. Then he strolled on.

The icy look, wherewith he had swept the driver, had taken in the details of abraded throat and of the torn coat lying beside him. Also it had conned and rightly tabulated the two increasingly red lumps on the driver's jaw, even as it had appraised Jamie's barked knuckles.

"Best be on your way," he adjured Dorner, over his shoulder, as he continued his beat.

Dorner was more than willing to obey the hint. The tire was in place, by this time. The driver slung his kit aboard; and made for his perch. As he passed Bobby, he cast a furtive look at the departing bluecoat's back. Then he took a chance.

He landed an emphatic kick on the dog's ribs. In practically the same motion he swung himself up to the seat; far out of reach of canine reprisal. Then he pressed the self-starter and got under way; with astounding speed considering the size of his truck.

The kick, thanks to its deliverer's haste, smote glancingly. It stung, rather than hurt. But it was the first kick Bobby had ever known, since his long-vanished puppy days in Lucius Frayne's Lochinvar kennels. With a wild-beast roar, Bobby hurled himself at the man who had offered him this vile affront.

But Malachi Dorner was well out of reach. Jamie dragged the dog back from under the truck-wheels. He himself was white with wrath at the cowardly action.

"Come down here and finish it!" he shrilled, heedless now of the chance that the poliçeman might hear him. "Come down here, you dog-kicking swine! I——"

The truck sped uphill, leaving him shaking an impotent and knuckle-torn fist after its grinning driver. Mackellar released Bobby and stooped to pick up his own damaged coat.

"Quiet down, Bobby boy!" soothed Jamie, as the dog continued to snarl in helpless rage after the vanishing truck. "We both made rare fools of ourselves, you and I. And what have we got to show for it? Here's my best everyday coat ripped to ribbons. And there's you, with a kick in the ribs to shame you. The coat'll mend, sooner than you'll be forgetting that same kick; if I know anything about the inside of your brain, Bobby lad. But that's all the good it'll do you.

So why not cool down, like me? Losh, but these knuckles of mine begin to sting me! Not so bad as them two taps on the jaw are fashing him, says you. And right you are, Bobby. Like you're apt to be."

Bobby, at the fascinatingly frequent repetition of his own name, deigned to cease growling murderously up the hill in the wake of the departed truck and to give something of his usual heed to his master's harangue.

"So that's that, Bobby, boy," resumed Jamie, as he tucked his wrecked coat under his arm and resumed his journey downhill. "And let it be a warning to you never to try to be human. When two dogs fly at one the other, in the street, we call them brute beasts, Bobby. But how about two grown men—men with souls and intellects and pants, and all that, Bobby? Here I and that stranger don't even know each other's names. And yet, before we'd seen each other sixty seconds, we were acting like we was two cranky mongrels in the dog pound. Fine examples to set you, Bobby lad! Mistress will scold; and she'll ask me when do I plan to grow up, Bobby. I'd best get this poor coat mended, downtown; and say I cut up my knuckles stumbling against a door. Come on, and stop havering. You talk too much, Bobby, boy! I've been noticing it, this long while."

He strode downhill at a swinging gait; Bobby trotting at his side. The little Scot was trying to walk and talk himself out of his groundswell of rage against the man who had tackled him and who had kicked his dog. Thus, again, presently, he drifted into speech.

"I was wrong to scold you, Bobby," he said, contritely. "You pitched into him, because he manhandled me. Just as I tried to pitch into him, when he kicked you. That was fine stuff, Bobby, lad. I'm apologizing to you for calling you a fool. It's a splendid breed of fool who takes such risks, just to stand by his pal. . . . Did ye see him reach back to his hip, Bobby? Twice, he did it. Was it a gun or a flask he wanted? In the old days, when a man reached for his hip, 'tother feller would hold up his hands and looked scared. Nowadays, 'tother feller holds *out* his hands and looks hopeful. But—I'm doubting he was offering us a drink, Bobby boy. Maybe the cop did us no ill turn, strolling in on us all when he did."

It was perhaps a fortnight later that a sample batch of summer climate was tossed into mid-April, as a specimen of what might be looked for in mid-July. The cool of the northern spring was changed in a trice into torrid August weather; which endured for two days thereafter, and broke up in a spectacular thunderstorm.

With the thermometer deserting the forties for the nineties, the heavy-coated collies of Beldencroft panted and fretted and drank much water and sought out cool angles of their runs to drowse in. The premature change got on their hairtrigger nerves. Their great blankets of unshed outer-and-inner coats caused them acute discomfort.

Lochinvar Bobby carried the heaviest coat at Beldencroft. But his luck was greater than that of his kennel brethren. For he could lounge at ease in a cool cellar or wander down to the brook and put its chilly waters to far more practical use than had been intended by the landscape gardener who had designed its ornamental course.

At midnight of the hot spell's second day, Bobby lay asleep on the handkerchief-sized veranda of Jamie Mackellar's cottage. His tawny coat was still damp from immersion in the brook. And on the porch corner he could catch the faintest tinge of breeze which wafted from the northeast.

Apart from this tiny breeze, the night was breathless. The sky was murkily lurid, where the city's lights tinged its low-hanging clouds. From the horizon's rim, in two directions, pulsed and ever intensified an endless shimmer of heat-lightning.

Bobby got up, once or twice, in search of a

cooler or softer section of the porch boards, for his nap. Failing to find what he sought, he would lay himself down again, sighing, and with a discouraged thump of his mighty body. The heat and the breathlessness were making him pant; as though from a long gallop. For, it is through the tongue alone that a dog can perspire.

After one of these vain quests for a spot which should be miraculously cool and soft, Bobby checked himself as he was about to lie down. His tired body stiffened. Up went his chiseled nose, to the faint breeze. His nostrils drew in quick whiffs of air.

That air was tainted, vaguely, with something which caused Bobby's hackles to bristle. His teeth began to show in something which looked like a smile and was not a smile. Far down in his shaggy throat a half-audible growl was born.

Even as humans tabulate folk by their faces, so do dogs remember them by their odor. The dog is the most nearsighted of all domestic animals. And his uncanny scent and hearing serve him in the place of vision.

To-night, borne on the fitful puff of northeast breeze, came to Lochinvar Bobby a far-off odor which awakened not alone recollection, but wrath as well. A second and stronger whiff of breeze verified the scent.

Bobby forgot his search for a comfortable

sleeping-place. He remembered only a man who had assailed his adored master and who had inflicted on the dog himself the unforgivable and unforgettable insult of a kick.

Lochinvar Bobby cleared the low porch rail and made for the northeast. The largest of the kennel-runs was in his path. He circled two sides of this at a tearing gallop. That was quite enough for the seven young dogs who, because of the heat, had been left out there for the night.

To their feet sprang the imprisoned pack; as Bobby sped halfway around their enclosure. And the night's silences were split by frantic barking from seven rackety throats.

The clangor, of course, was taken up, instantly, by every other collie in the Beldencroft kennels For, even better than dogmen, do collies know how to translate a bark.

If some lonely or sentimental or fretful dog in the kennels had begun to bark, in order to voice his woes, not a collie would have echoed him. But the vocal efforts of the aroused septette bespoke indignation and much angry excitement.

Such a bark never goes unanswered. Thus, fifty-odd strong-lunged collies shattered the midnight with a galaxy of din. The place was in a turmoil.

Bobby, the cause of it all, did not heed nor stay. Every stride was bringing to him more distinctly

that fury-provoking scent. And, raging, he sped on.

Malachi Dorner—of Canada and St. Louis and points between—was in the middle of his night's southward drive, (at $1.75 per mile)—and planned to skirt and pass Midwestburg before one o'clock in the morning.

For, his cleverly constructed and pneumatic-tired truck was heavy-laden with goods whose market value increased at every southerly mile of the journey. And he wanted to leave the ungreased city far behind him, as soon as might be.

The garage-and-roadhouse where he was scheduled to make his next twelve-hour halt—or "stache," in the vernacular of his trade—was but seventy miles beyond. If, by putting on extra speed, he could convert an hour or so of driving into an hour or so of extra sleep, so much the better. And he stepped on the accelerator. His nerves, like those of the Beldencroft collies, were frayed and on edge from the heat.

Dorner was topping Crescent Hill, when he put on an extra burst of speed. At the hill's summit was the gaudy Belden estate. Then would come the steep pitch, down into the edge of Midwestburg; and after that the smooth miles of open and friendly and well-greased country; with the hospitable garage-and-roadhouse ahead.

Up the easy slope toward Beldencroft sped the

truck. Dorner put on another notch or two of gas. He knew he must use the brakes, more than he liked, on the steep and winding pitch beyond the crest. Hence, the extra speed on the easier incline. As he topped the gentle rise he did not bother to ease up on the gas. The furlong of level road was an ideal sprinting place.

The overstrained treads gripped the smooth stretch; and the truck sprang forward. One of the tires, incidentally, gripped a semi-flat and keen-edged shard of glass; remnant of a broken milk bottle dropped there, from a wagon, an hour earlier. The shard was lengthwise across the tire's way. And it cut like a knife blade.

The truck was going at something over thirty miles an hour. The collapse of the tire gave a wrench to the front axle which all-but tore the steering wheel from Dorner's careless grip.

Too late, the man twisted the wheel back into line. The truck had swerved a few inches too far to the right. Its right front wheel smote with terrific force the first of a line of piled telephone poles; which adorned that section of the road edge in preparation for a branch line to be run into the city.

The axle snapped like rotten wood, under the jarring impact. The truck careened drunkenly, plowed its way a little deeper into the heap of prostrate poles; and banged to a halt. Dorner

was flung hard against the steering wheel, and clung convulsively to it in order to keep his balance on the sideways-listing seat.

There he sat, till the breath, expelled by the colliding of diaphragm with unyielding steering wheel, came back to his deflated lungs. Then, shaking both fists heavenward, Malachi Dorner launched into a pyrotechnic monologue addressed to his Creator.

At best, it is not pleasant to ditch a car and smash an axle, at midnight, a mile or more from the nearest garage. But when one is carrying cargo salable at many thousand dollars and when that cargo is of a sort confiscatory by law, the situation becomes, all at once, acute.

Nor was the incident likely to enhance Dorner's popularity or wage-value in the eyes of his Canadian employers. The driver's brimstone harangue to high heaven took on a note of added fervor.

As if in chorus to his solo, a fanfare of wild barking surged forth upon the night.

Then, after swearing himself breathless again, Dorner decided on his only course. A hundred yards or more in front of him was the big estate he knew so well. Thence, of course, came the reverberant volley of barks. The best thing to do was to go thither; ask for the use of the telephone; and call up the nearest greased garage.

A wrecking crew could reach the spot in short order.

The hour was late. The road was lonely and was ill-patrolled by the police. It was not likely that any outsider would interfere, At worst, he would reach his sleeping place somewhat later than he had hoped to.

Reasoning himself, thus, into calmness, Malachi Dorner got up from his tilted seat and began to make his way to earth. He chose the side of the truck highest in air, lest his weight cause the precariously swaying vehicle to topple. It was a long way to the ground. Malachi Dorner began the descent, backward; as if climbing down a ladder. He did not finish the descent at all.

From the seat, to the top of a dished wheel, he made his first step. Thence, gropingly, he lowered his exploring foot to the wheel's hub. As his toe found and balanced itself on this slanting surface, Malachi Dorner addressed his Maker once more; this time in a screech of astonished pain. And, instinctively, he swarmed up the tilted side of the truck; to the safety of the seat.

Lochinvar Bobby, following the guidance of his own unerring nose, had swept down the driveway of Beldencroft and out into the highroad. Body low, tiny white feet flying, he dashed along in dead silence toward two dimmed and slanted car-lights. He reached and passed these lights.

From the skies or elsewhere was descending into his reach the body of the man whose rank scent he had caught;—the man who had kicked him—the man who was his master's foe and his.

Bobby was too much in earnest to use finesse; far too angry to give voice. He sprang upward, his mighty jaws driving for the nearest and most obvious part of Malachi Dorner's anatomy.

Through trouser-seat and underclothes and skin and flesh sheared the curved fangs; grinding against the very bone.

It was the shock and fiery anguish of that onslaught which wrung from Dorner the ear-torturing howl and which sent him sprinting up the sloped side of the truck like a monkey on a stick.

If Bobby had been a bulldog or a bullterrier, he would have held his grip, with locked jaws; and would have accompanied and impeded Dorner's upward flight.

But a fighting collie has his wolf ancestor's way of abandoning one hold for a better, with bewildering swiftness; thereby giving the impression of being everywhere at once. Bobby's teeth struck the bone. At once he knew he had done all the damage, with that particular hold, that there was scope for.

He let go and slashed for the ankle as it climbed

past him. His eyetooth found a goal just above Dorner's shoe-top.

But the dog's next leap was fruitless. The snapping jaws closed upon nothing. His victim was on the truck's tilted seat; well out of reach.

Dorner stood there—it was obviously out of the question for him to sit down, either then or for some days thereafter—and nursed his abraded ankle with one hand, while, with the other, he repeated his familiar hipward gesture. But he paused, before he had drawn forth what he was reaching for.

Obviously, in the present condition of his body and of his truck, tact forbade him to introduce himself to the neighborhood by a succession of shots at the leaping and vaguely-seen collie. The killing of a pet dog must lead to inquiry, after the firing of the shots should have brought the world at large running to the scene. And inquiry is the very last thing desired by the travelers of the Greased Road.

Malachi Dorner began to hunt, in the jumble of tools under the seat, for the truck's crank. Finding it, he prepared to climb down and to do battle with the dog who stood between him and the chance of telephoning for a wrecking crew.

A hard enough blow on skull or backbone, with the heavy crank, would put the collie well out of fighting trim. And, the racket of barking at dis-

ant Beldencroft could be counted on to drown all esser sounds of strife.

But, listening, he found the multiple barks had eased. Except for the low, incessant growling of Bobby, the breathless silence had settled down once more. Dorner made his painful way toward the ground, poising the crank for a blow. Bobby ceased growling and stood alertly watching the maneuver.

Goaded by keen pain and by the keener need of getting himself and his truck on their journey again, Dorner slid to the road.

Bobby met him with a rush. The crank whizzed downward for the dog's skull. But Lochinvar Bobby was not there when it fell. Wolf-like, he leaped back from the swashing blow; gauging his distance perfectly, and flashing in with the same speed; when the crank's end hit the ground. Before Dorner could swing the weapon aloft again, Bobby had raked his hand and wrist; and was once more alertly ready to dodge the flailing crank.

Bobby was having a beautiful time. The first red rage had left him; now that this was to be a combat and not a mere punitive expedition. With gay mischief he entered upon the duel; understanding its general rules as well as did Dorner; and preparing to invent such few additional rules as he did not comprehend.

But, with dogs, as with humans, something or somebody is always interfering; at the very moment when interference means spoiled sport.

And now, from a hundred feet behind, came Jamie Mackellar's high voice and the sound of Jamie Mackellar's running steps.

Jamie was calling his dog by name. And Jamie's was the one call that Bobby never disobeyed. Reluctantly, the dog drew back from the enthralling pastime of dodging the murderous crank; and he trotted off toward his advancing master.

The frightful din of the Beldencroft collies had brought Jamie to wakefulness, on the jump. Waiting only to don trousers and slippers, he had sallied forth to investigate. So had the kennelmen. So, with equal haste but in worse temper, had the august Rufus G. Belden.

While the kennelmen were quieting the hysterical pack, Mackellar whistled for Bobby. As a rule the big dog did not stir ten feet from his self-chosen post of night guard. But now, for some unknown reason, he was not within call.

Jamie ran down the driveway, calling as he went. As he neared the ornate front gates, he heard a yell of mortal pain. Out into the road he scurried. There, to the right, he saw the two dimmed and slanted motor-lights.

He called again. And, from behind the lights

appeared his dog. Jamie hurried to meet him. Bobby, tingling with excitement, touched his master's hand with his cold nose and then wheeled about, galloping toward the truck; glancing eagerly backward as he went.

The world over, this is a dog's invitation to a human to follow him. Mackellar followed.

His flashlight revealed to him the half-upset vehicle with its tarpaulined covering abulge with boxes and cases. On the lofty seat crouched a blaspheming giant who wielded a crank. The flashlight made clear to Jamie the driver's pain-distorted face.

Mackellar whistled softly, under his breath. Then he looked with new interest at the listing cargo of boxes. Bobby danced frantically about him; making occasional little rushes at the unreachable Dorner, who had been prudent enough to remount the truck as soon as the dog had been summoned away.

"I bust an axle," the driver was explaining with noisy volubility, "and I got down to see could I fix it. And this cur tackled me. He seemed to belong to you, stranger. Will you grab hold of him and then tell me how to get to the nearest phone? I'll make it worth your while."

"You've made it worth my while, already," answered Jamie's timid voice. "You made it worth my while, a couple of weeks back. You don't

seem to remember me; or even Bobby, here. Last time, you pitched onto me like you was a wild beast. Afterward, you kicked Bobby. The cop interfered, before I could pay my share of the bill. From the red splashes on this dished wheel, Bobby seems to have paid some of his. Well," he finished lamely, "I'm here. Will you come down, or must I come up for you?"

Before the dumfounded driver could make answer—before he could do more than whip out blusteringly the pistol from his hip—the pad of several running feet on the road saved Jamie from demolition. Up charged Rufus G. Belden, sketchily clad; with the estate's night watchman and a kennelman at his heels.

"What's all this?" boomed Rufus G., playing his flashlight over the wreck. "Who's——?"

His fat jaw fell slack; as he caught the import of the cargo. Whirling about on Mackellar and the two others, he commanded:

"Go back to the house, all of you! I want a chat with this man. Mackellar, get to the phone as quick as you can and call up——"

"9999 Arcady," glibly supplemented the relieved Dorner; adding: "And you'd make a big hit, Boss, with some folks we know, if you'd fire that little cuss and shoot his dog. He pretty near——"

"Shut up!" interrupted Rufus G. "Mackellar,

ut over to the phone and send to that garage for wrecking crew. 9999 Arcady. Jump!"

Malachi Dorner grinned, through his pain, at he meek promptitude of Jamie in obeying the reat man's behest. Without a word or an in-tant of hesitation, Mackellar chirped Bobby to eel; and, followed by the two other employees, lodded away.

Five minutes later, Rufus G. returned from his olloquy with the much-bitten Dorner.

The potent Belden was one of many far-scat-ered politicians to derive a fair slice of profit hrough dividends in the Greased Road industry. As a sporting venture, the business appealed trongly to him. And his power as a state polit-cal giant made him of vast use to the clique.

Yet, modestly, he had chosen to get out of the way before the arrival of the wrecking crew.

The new city administration was at logger-heads with the mighty Rufus G. The new police commissioner was his sworn foe. Belden did not care to be seen in the neighborhood of the broken-down truck; in the unlikely event of a policeman chancing to pass the spot, on his beat, before the crew should be through with its task.

It might give political enemies further chance for unjust slanders. The more so, since the city administration was just then waging a fierce and

honest fight against such offenders as Dorner and the latter's employers.

On the wide marble veranda steps of the Belden mansion were sitting, close side by side, a little man and a big dog. As Belden drew within earshot, he heard Jamie saying, in a crooningly confidential voice, to his collie:

"Anyhow, Bobby, lad, there's *one* myst'ry cleaned up. We know now whether he was reaching back for a gun or a flask, that other day. He——"

"Chase off to bed," ordained Rufus G. "There's nothing to keep us up, any longer. What are you waiting for?"

"Only just to give you our resignations, sir," said Jamie, politely. "Our resignations—Bobby's and mine. To-morrow morning, we're off, we two. Good night, sir."

He rose; and started down the steps.

"Hold on, there!" boomed the astounded Rufus G. "What's the idea? Are you crazy? What in blue blazes is the matter?"

"The matter, sir," replied Jamie, pausing in his departure, "is that I took service under a law-abiding boss. Or I thought I did. I didn't hire out to work for a man who stands in with booze-runners and smashers of the Constitootion. That's all, sir. My own morals are tough. They might stand it. But Bobby's still young, and I've

ot to watch out for his. We're through, he nd I."

"Rot! You're——"

"I'm not saying I cheer every time I hear the Volstead law spoke of," continued Jamie. "Or hat I don't like a drink or two,—or maybe three. But I'm not working for a man who pays me noney he gets by breaking the country's laws,— a man who collogues, on the sly, with that collie-kicking, gun-toting blackguard, back yonder. Maybe, I don't put it in the right words. Maybe t isn't all clear, even in my own mind. But that's how I feel. Not wishing to speak too free to my boss, sir. Good night."

"You wall-eyed idiot!" roared Belden, shaking him roughly by one thin shoulder. "You mangy little Puritan! I swear I believe you're in earnest."

"I'm an unco' poor hand at cracking jokes, sir," answered Jamie, in no way resenting the shoulder shake that swayed his whole meager body. "And there's mighty little joke-stuff in throwing over a grand job like this."

Again, swearing volubly, Belden shook the bony shoulder. Jamie did not draw away.

Nor did Lochinvar Bobby, after one sharp glance up at Belden, resent his master's mishandling.

"You're a pest—a scourge—a damn' nuisance

Mackellar!" snarled Rufus G. "Just because you're the best collie handler on earth and the only man on earth who isn't afraid of me and who doesn't try to rob me—you allow yourself a lot of impertinent liberties. I've a good mind to take you at your word, and let you go."

He glared down into the impassive little face. Jamie made no reply.

"What do you want me to do?" growled Belden, presently.

"To let me phone Midwestburg Police Headquarters, instead of that Greased Road garage, sir," spoke up Mackellar promptly.

"I'll see you in blazes first! D'you take me for a fool?

"No, sir. And I'm sore at heart, to have to take you for a knave."

The lurid heat lightning on the horizon was augmented by Rufus G. Belden's sulphurous vocal efforts. Jamie listened unmoved. Bobby cocked his head on one side and hearkened with real enjoyment. In the first pause, Mackellar said:

"Bobby, boy, you're learning some fearsome new words. Try to forget them, Bobby. After to-morrow morning, we'll be out of reach of such godless haverings. We——"

"Go, then; if you're set on leaving the best job you'll ever have!" grumbled Belden. "I can spare you, easy enough."

"Yes, sir," said Jamie. "Good night, sir."

"Do you know what that consignment is worth?" sputtered Rufus G. "You'd be tearing a hole in my dividends, that a horse could walk through! And you'd be getting me in bad, with the whole ring. I'd be an idiot to listen to such rot. If it wasn't that you and Bobby are——"

"Yes, sir?"

Belden stood silent. So did Mackellar. So did the great dog. Presently, Rufus G. groaned, miserably:

"Oh, go and phone the police, then! Go and——"

"Yes, sir," responded Jamie Mackellar, with great meekness; but making no move to obey. "Thank you, sir. I was sure you were too white to——"

"Stop blithering; and go and phone them!" bellowed Rufus G. "Go and phone; before I get sane enough to change my mind. Go and——"

"Yes, sir. I did, sir. I—I couldn't seem to remember rightly that garage number. So I took the liberty of phoning police headquarters, instead. (That—that looks something like the patrol wagon, 'way over yonder, just mounting the rise. Yes,—that's it, all right. And it's coming fast.) I—I took the liberty of phoning, in your name, sir."

"You——?"

"Yes, sir. It'll do a lot to square you. And it'll stop all the nasty digs the administration papers have been making about you and the Greased Road. I never did believe those lies."

"You miserable little——!"

"It's *fine* not to have to leave your service!" sighed Mackellar, happily. "You've just done a big thing, sir—a grand thing—if you'll forgive a silly old employee for speaking so free. I'm—I'm fair proud to work for such a boss. Good night, sir. Come along, Bobby, boy; till I wash your mouth out. You've been biting into carrion, this night!"

CHAPTER VI: THE TEST

IT began simply enough, with a late winter walk. The walkers were little Jamie Mackellar; and his big collie, Champion Lochinvar Bobby.

This morning's walk was uneventful enough for both dog and man, until Bobby chanced to pursue a cat down an alleyway. He took a short cut through a mud-puddle, during this blissful chase. His flying feet slipped on a film of ice and he fell sprawling in the puddle's muddiest depths.

Rolling over, Bobby regained his feet in something like a tenth of a second. But not before his magnificent tawny coat was one thick smear of mud.

The cat vanished over a fence; and Bobby, at Jamie's first call, galloped merrily back to his master. Mackellar, frowning ruefully, surveyed his disreputable chum.

"Eh, Bobby, you miserable tatterdemalion!" he sighed. "Not three days ago you had your bath —a grand bath, Bobby, lad!—and not an hour ago I brushed you, till you shone. And look at you, now! Look at you, *now,* I'm asking you, Bobby. Did you ever see the like of you, for fair filthiness

and muck? 'No' (says you, being at heart a truthful tyke), 'I never did.' "

Bobby hung his head, ruefully. Jamie continued, in plaintive rebuke:

"What'll Mistress say, when I lug you home looking like one of the children's mud-pies on four legs? And what'll *I* be thinking when all the folk hereabout set eyes on you and get the idea that Jamie Mackellar knows no better than keep a collie in such hagorous shape? Home we go, Bobby, lad;—home to a bath. Come along!"

Now, naturally, Lochinvar Bobby understood the meaning of only a tithe of Mackellar's words; despite the fact that Jamie had always talked to him as to a fellow-human. But from long experience he read the voice and the face of the man with perfect ease.

From these he gathered that he was being scolded; but that Mackellar was not really angry at him and that he himself had not committed any sin.

Yet Bobby listened, downcast; and he fell into step behind Jamie, with drooping head and brush. Not alone because he was dirty and because he loathed dirt; but chiefly because he had twice heard his master utter that detested word, "bath." And Bobby's heart sank, dejectedly, at thought of the scrubbing and the abhorrent reek of soap, in store for him.

Few collies really enjoy swimming. Almost none of them like a tub-bath.

For some distance, through the outskirts of Midwestburg, on their return journey to Beldencroft at the summit of Crescent Hill, the two hurried along. The mud was drying on Bobby's glorious coat. This, and his morose anticipation of a bath, gave him a furtively tramplike air; at utter variance with his wonted proud beauty.

Once only did he rouse himself from his lethargy of gloom. That was when he and Jamie chanced to pass the white-fenced front yard of a house about a mile from Beldencroft.

From the steps of the house sprang up a dozing collie—pale-gold-and-white of hue, dainty of line, classic of head. At sight of Bobby, this dog cleared the steps in a bound, and came charging down toward the pickets; barking in strident challenge.

As a rule, Bobby paid no heed to swaggering advances from dogs he met on his walks with Jamie. At worst, an impatient growl or a momentary glint of teeth was his answer to such defiances.

But to-day, he neither showed his teeth nor growled. Instead, he cast aside his air of misery; and trotted up to the palings, with tail awag. For a wellbred collie does not resent the barking insults of the female of his species.

He and the gold-and-white little beauty touched noses through the picket spaces. The new dog wagged her tail hospitably and did a series of dance steps; then galloped madly off for some ten or twelve feet and wheeled to see why Bobby did not accept the invitation for a romp.

The picket fence was Bobby's sole reason for not accepting. Now, as she glanced back at him over her shoulder, he cleared the fence-top with ridiculous ease and trotted over the scrap of lawn toward his new friend.

Jamie, missing him, turned about; just in time to see an obese and overdressed woman emerge from the house, squalling shrilly:

"Lass! Lassie! Come here, at once! Get away, you nasty brute! Scat!"

The last half of her speech was addressed to the mud-coated Bobby; who stopped short, as she advanced shooingly upon him. He surveyed the woman with no fear at all; but also with no favor. Instinct told him this was not an understander of dogs. His sensitive eardrums, too, were irritated by her shrilly raucous voice.

The other collie crouched, terror-stricken, at approach of her mistress; and began to slink away. Plainly, experience, as well as instinct, warned her of danger.

Jamie Mackellar's brows creased in disapproval, at sight of Lass's fear. The fear could

spring from but one cause. Knowing collies as he did, he had scant patience with any man or woman who, by needless brutality, produces that look of terror in their eyes and that cringingly panic way of slinking off.

Tersely, he called Bobby back to him. The dog, with one wistful glance toward his frightened new playmate, cleared the palings again; and stood at his master's side. The woman, in midlawn, scowled after him. Then, turning on the timid-looking little Mackellar, she snapped:

"I'll thank you to keep your dirty cur off my premises! He——"

"Asking pardon, ma'am," put in Jamie, "he's no cur. Yon's Champion Lochinvar. Bobby, ma'am. There's not his like in America. He's a wee peckle muddy. But that's by reason of a little accident with a cat and a mud-puddle. . . . That's a fine young collie you have," he finished, conciliatingly. "I—I compliment you on her."

"She was given to me, last week," said the woman, crankily. "And she's a pest. I'll either teach her to mind, or I'll thrash the life out of her. She——"

"H'm!" commented Jamie, eyeing the frightened dog. "You've made a grand start—one way or the other. Come on, Bobby, lad!"

It was as they rounded the next corner that an ice-truck skidded on the slippery pavement;

and knocked Jamie Mackellar under its wheels.

When the policeman came puffing up, he found an overturned truck with a senseless and crushed driver wedged under it. Some few feet farther back, he saw Jamie Mackellar lying, also unconscious; with a scalp abrasion and with a compound fracture of the left leg.

A momentarily-increasing crowd surrounded the two victims. But they pressed less closely around Mackellar than around the driver. This, because a huge and mud-streaked collie stood guard over Jamie's oddly crumpled body.

Lochinvar Bobby, by turns, bent whimpering and quivering above his master, licking the muddy face, in an agony of grief; then standing erect again to snarl murderous defiance at the spectators.

One Good Samaritan had sought to lay hands on Jamie, to carry him to the sidewalk. Bobby had flown at the man with a concentrated fury which not only frustrated the kindly attempt but kept every one else at arm's length.

There stood the great dog, heartbroken, bereft, savage; above the unconscious little man who was his god. And none dared break in on his vigil.

The policeman turned in a ambulance call. Then, being prudent, he decided to center his attention on the mishap's other victim. While he

was still examining the driver, the ambulance came up.

At the same instant, Jamie Mackellar awoke; dull-headed but sensible enough to know himself to be in a hell of anguish. Stupidly, he blinked upward into Lochinvar Bobby's worried dark eyes.

"Bobby, lad!" he whispered, dazedly, "Whatever on earth's happened me? Are we——?"

The ambulance surgeon bustled up. Bobby growled; and stood between him and Mackellar.

"Let him be, Bobby, boy!" panted Jamie. "He's all right. Leave him alone! He——"

Pain and the effort to speak were a combination too strong for Mackellar's tortured nerves. He fainted.

But his order had been given and had been understood. This white-coated human, who stank of pungent disinfectants, was to be let alone. So much Bobby knew. Jamie had said the man was all right and must not be molested. And Lochinvar Bobby had never in all his life disobeyed or questioned a command of his adored master.

Unwillingly, and still growling a little under his breath, the dog drew back. Quivering with misery and with a craving to interfere, he none the less stood quiescent, while the white-coated man and another picked up the limp Jamie and put him in the ambulance. Jamie had said:

"He's all right. Leave him alone!"

And Jamie's order must be obeyed.

Presently, the ambulance drove off. Bobby followed; galloping close behind it, through the straggling outskirts of Midwestburg and later through the choked traffic of the city's streets.

At last the vehicle stopped in front of a large building;—a building which, even from the outside, gave forth to Bobby's acute senses the same disliked odor as had the clothes of the white-coated man.

Jamie was borne carefully indoors. Bobby followed close behind the stretcher. A man at the side door reached out to bar the dog's way. Bobby paused only long enough to slash at the outthrust hand.

The man stepped back, and aimed a kick. The dog wheeled upon him with such an aspect of silent rage that the man hopped nimbly up on a table. Bobby paid him no further heed; but followed the stretcher-bearers.

Into a room, they carried Mackellar. The door swung shut, behind them; in Bobby's face. Imperiously, the collie scratched for admittance. Then he flung himself in a fury of eagerness against the strong panels. The panels did not give. And no one came to let him in.

Bobby stretched himself out across the thresh-

old, with a long sigh; pressing his nostrils to the crack under the door; and prepared to wait.

Inside the room he could hear voices and moving feet. Over and above the sickening disinfectant-reek, he could catch the loved scent of his master. And he was content to wait.

Once or twice a shambling orderly or an icily efficient nurse came past, from some other part of the corridor. At Bobby's savage show of teeth, these intruders gave the collie a wide berth and moved on. Nobody came out through the doorway he guarded.

Meantime, inside the white room, Jamie had come to his senses; and had told who he was. Someone telephoned to Rufus G. Belden.

In another five minutes, at that omnipotent personage's mandate, Jamie was sent home in a private ambulance, with a doctor and a nurse as escort. He was carried out through a door other than that whereby he had entered. Thus, only by loss of his master's scent, did Bobby know Mackellar was no longer on the other side of that obstinately closed portal.

Jamie was not there. And it behooved Bobby to find him. The dog jumped up and scratched again at the panel. This time some one heard the sound and opened the door, to investigate. Into the long, many-doored room dashed Bobby; sniffing the hateful air; peering in all directions:

running in circles to pick up the scent of Jamie's steps.

But as Mackellar had been carried in and then out again on a stretcher, there was no such clue. Out of the room sprang the collie; galloping from corridor to corridor, in growing desperation. No, Jamie was not anywhere within sight or sound. He was gone! And there was no way of guessing whither he had been spirited.

If Lochinvar Bobby had been a human, he would doubtless have gone straight home. But he was merely a dog;—and, at that, a dog of a breed which is prone to think things out.

He saw no need of going home. To him, home and Jamie Mackellar meant one and the same thing. He had left the Mackellar cottage, back of the Beldencroft kennels, that morning, in company with Jamie. Wherefore, by all canine logic, Jamie was not at the cottage. The nearest spot whither he had traced Mackellar was this ill-smelling hospital. And, search and scent showed him Jamie was no longer here.

Distracted, the collie trotted out of the building and made his aimless way up the street.

Bobby was the chum and the devoted adorer of Jamie Mackellar. But to no one except Jamie had he ever given allegiance. True, he was moderately fond of Jamie's big Yorkshire wife—who,

by the way, felt only the mildest interest in dogs. But he was not devoted to her.

Also, he was fond of Jamie's two children. But both of those children were away at school, just now. In a patronizing and tepid fashion he was on friendly terms with the august Rufus G. Belden and with the kennel men. But none of them counted for much in his life.

No, there was no reason for hurrying to Beldencroft; or indeed for going thither at all; now that Jamie was not there. Nor could he pursue any logical quest for his lost master; without a single clue. He must needs accept heartache and bewildered loneliness; unless fate should in some way bring him and Mackellar together again.

Yet, collie-fashion, before giving up all hope, he cast back upon his trail. He retraced the long journey from mid-city to outskirts; to the place where Mackellar had been struck down. There he sniffed about the spot on the greasy street where Jamie's body had lain.

As he was giving up this unprofitable task, another recognized scent assailed his keen nostrils.

Around the corner, from her home in the next block, was promenading the large and raucous-voiced woman who had called him a dirty cur and had shooed him out of her yard. By a flimsy leash she was leading the gold-and-white young collie, Lass. In the woman's other hand swung

a plaited dog-whip—an object unfamiliar to Bobby.

Wagging his tail, in friendly welcome, Bobby advanced toward his new collie acquaintance. Lass, at sight of him, sprang forward with playful eagerness. The jump caused the loose-hung leash to dig into the woman's pudgy wrist; and gave her arm a sudden wrench. Angry at the hurt and the jar, she yanked vexedly on the leash; jerking Lass back on her haunches.

Lass, foreseeing punishment, dodged behind her mistress's skirt. She did this, just as the woman turned to strike her. As a result, the leash looped itself around the beefy ankles. Without waiting to extricate herself, the woman brought down the dog-whip swishingly across Lass's dainty back. Then several things happened.

At sound of the blow and of Lass's pitiful cry, Bobby sprang forward; every line of his powerful body abristle with hostility. But there was no need for him to interfere. For, as she cried out, Lass bounded as far as possible to one side to escape further punishment.

The woman, leaning far to that side, aimed another blow. As a result, the looped leash not only tightened about her fatted calves, but was pulled sharply to the left by Lass's jump.

The woman sat down; very hard indeed. Lass,

running backward to get out of the way of the swooping avalanche of flesh, strained against her collar. The collar, being loose, slipped off over her back-pulled head. The woman, scrambling up, purple with rage, flourished the whip and made a wild rush at her dog. As she rushed, she squalled ferocious threats.

Lass did not wait to be caught. Incontinently, she turned and fled. And, shoulder to shoulder with her, galloped Lochinvar Bobby.

Life was taking a new turn for Bobby. His mind, dazed by the bitter grief of his loss, yearned toward this new friend of his own species. Having no desired home to return to, he followed the runaway steps of gold-and-white Lass.

Aimlessly Lass fled; her one idea, at first, being to escape from the swishing dog-whip and from its bad-tempered wielder.

Her brief stay with this mistress of hers had been a period of terror and of pain. In the far off New Jersey kennels of her birth, she had always been treated kindly. But the woman had made life a horror to her. And she was eager to put as much distance as possible between them.

Presently, as she ran, she was aware of Bobby's comforting presence at her side. She slackened pace; and touched noses with him. Then, she glanced back for her pursuer. The woman was not in sight. The two dogs relaxed

their gallop into a leisurely trot. In another minute, Bobby came to a stop.

They were at the summit of a hill. Below, in front, was a straggling suburb of the city they had left behind. Beyond the suburb was a plain. Beyond the plain towered a ridge, which separated Midwestburg and its outskirts from the miles of rolling forest and farmland, that stretched away almost to Canada.

The sight of the ridge and a whiff of the odors blown thence by the March wind, awoke strange memories and stranger impulses in the masterless Bobby.

Over that ridge, as a gangling, scared puppy, he had scrampled his tired way on a winter night, years agone. He had traveled on to Blake's Woods, beyond; where, under the rotting dance pavilion of other days, he had made a lair. Thence, for nearly a year, he had sallied at nights to ravage henroost and fold and rabbit warren and partridge copse.

He had loved that wild life; and he had thriven mightily on it. He had left it, because Jamie Mackellar had found him and brought him home. After that, the dog had longed for nothing better in life than to follow and serve Jamie. The love for a master had overcome the love of the Wild.

But now, Jamie had disappeared. And. ahead

of Bobby lay the forest. The old urge swept through him.

He turned excitedly toward the waiting Lass. Again their noses touched.

No one can prove whether or not dogs have a language of their own. But no one who has studied them can doubt that in the touching of noses they somehow communicate their primal thoughts or wishes to each other.

Bobby, after that instant of contact, whirled about and cantered down the slope toward the distant ridge. Lass hesitated not at all in the following. Side by side, at a hand-gallop, they reached the plain. They crossed it with an odd new furtiveness, giving houses a wide berth; and at last gaining the ridge. Up this they toiled; and down its farther side into the borders of Blake's Woods.

These woods marked the boundary of the primeval forest. Once they had been a favorite picnic ground for Midwestburgers. But long ago they had been abandoned in favor of a resort on the Lake. Since then they had been trodden only by occasional hunters or by boys seeking nuts. In the center of the grove still stood the weed-hidden and decaying structure; which had once been a dancing floor and later had been Bobby's lair.

Toward this, now, Bobby was heading, at top

speed. Yet, by some queer mental twist, he no longer plunged openly through the undergrowth; as does the normal forest-running collie. Into his gait and into his expression had come something stealthy. His running feet made no sound. He ran close to earth and took advantage of every bit of cover, to mask his progress from chance humans.

He himself did not realize why he did this, nor what change had come over him at sight of this old lair of his.

His loyal heart still ached unspeakably for his lost master. Had Jamie appeared in the offing, the dog would have rushed to him in an ecstasy of joy; and would have followed him gleefully away from this fascinating wilderness, and even from the still more fascinating Lassie.

But Jamie did not appear. And, next to Jamie, the dog loved this wild life he was returning to.

Lass, by instinct, began to copy his furtive gait and his caution. No longer did she frisk along as heedlessly as a child on a woodland holiday. She, too, sped through the undergrowth with hushed stealthiness, at the heels of her huge guide.

Presently, they came to the platform. Bobby skirted it, sniffing and peering, till he found what he sought. He halted in front of a ragged aperture in the rotted laths which formed the sides of the platform. This was the hole he had

discovered, in puppyhood;—the hole leading into the low and leaf-strewn lair beneath the flooring.

Crouching with stomach to earth, and pausing after each careful forward step, he made his way under the platform. The place was as he had left it—dark, mouldy, airless. The flooring above was a rotted shell. Yet it still served as roof, even as the riffle of many years' leaves served as warm bedding.

Thus began a strange life; and one that sometimes almost made Bobby forget his grief at loss of Mackellar. Lass, under the guidance of her worshipped new mate, took to the wilderness with as much zest as if she had been born in it. And there the two dwelt; as, aforetime, mated wolves had dwelt in these same forests.

On the first evening of their woodland life, pangs of hunger began to rack them both, when suppertime arrived with no supper to accompany it. Harking back to early days, Bobby sallied forth to forage. Obediently, Lass trotted along beside him.

At the end of a hundred yards he struck a fresh rabbit-scent. Instantly, the hunting lore of his youth returned to him. Noiseless, with couchant body, he flitted along the track. In another fifty yards he checked his speed with a suddenness that all-but made the close-following Lass collide with him.

She stood, puzzled and hesitant; and watched him creep forward like a cat, for some little distance; then dart ahead with the whizzing speed of a bullet. As she caught up with him, she saw he was pinning to earth a plump and kicking rabbit. Politely, he shifted his grip on the prize, to allow her a chance to rend it with him.

That was their first meal in the Wild. And, for weeks thereafter they fared sumptuously. The hunting season was long past. From lack of molestation the rabbits had grown incautious. Bobby was a born tracker. And, with marvelous quickness, Lass picked up the art of tracking and of stalking. The two waxed fatter, from their abundant feasting.

But, in another month, the rabbits for a mile or so around the lair seemed to have learned that the vicinity was not healthful for them, nor conducive to long life. And—even as a rabbit-infested neighborhood becomes deserted soon after the opening of the hunting season—the once-populous stretch of Blake's Woods lost its long-eared denizens.

It became needful to range farther and farther afield, in order to catch a single unwary rabbit. Bobby took this change philosophically; and strove to add to the rations an occasional tracked partridge or a mouthful of baby quail. Lass hit on a less sportsmanly device.

The two did the bulk of their hunting, by night; keeping close to the lair, for the most part, by day. In this respect, as well as in a score of others, they were throwing back to their wolf-ancestors. The careless sauntering of some farmer or idler through the grove was enough to make them crouch to the ground, under the platform or under the nearest bit of cover; and lie there moveless and tense, until the intruder had passed. Probably neither of them realized why they did this or why they returned in other ways to wolf traits.

This is the unsportsmanly device hit upon by Lass to gain food, when rabbits waxed scarce: One night, the collies had quartered the region for several miles in every direction, without putting up a single rabbit or a catchable bird or squirrel. As Bobby stood, irresolute, Lass took the leadership into her own hands.

She cantered off, with an air of definiteness; in a direction whence a scent had caught her nostrils. Bobby, not understanding, nevertheless loped along at her side. In a mile or less, she slowed down at the edge of a farm-clearing; and, with noiseless tread, crept toward the half-open door of a henhouse.

From within issued the odor that had drawn her thither—the smell of warm flesh and feathers.

Now, Bobby's own first exploit in the wilds, as

a puppy, had been the theft of a chicken. That had been while he was still his own god and before he had learned the laws of Man and adoration for one man. Since then, again and again, he had seen puppies at Beldencroft scolded for chasing chickens.

On his own first return to civilization, he had casually and skilfully bitten off the head of one of Mackellar's hens. And Jamie had told him, sorrowfully, yet with much vehemence, how wicked and unworthy a deed it was. Jamie had instilled into Bobby's wise brain, in that one lesson, the fact that chickens belong to mankind and are not to be molested by dogs.

On another day, he had called Bobby back, as the collie had started gleesomely after a lamb in a field; and had made him understand that, so far as dogs are concerned, lambs come under the same "hands off" category as do fowls.

To-night, as Lass wormed her way forward to the invitingly open hencoop door, Bobby sprang in front of her. Urged by some impulse he was not able to comprehend or to resist, he interposed his shaggy seventy-pound bulk between his hungry mate and the tempting prey. To Lass's vast annoyance and amaze, he shouldered her gently back from the doorway and toward the fringe of forest.

Thus it was the two went supperless, that

night; because Bobby's mind, once having grasped the Law, could not forget it or let him break it.

As if by way of reward, the very next evening, came an astoundingly fine bit of luck to the pair.

As they were issuing, famished, from the lair, at dusk, something came blundering and crashing through the bushes, straight toward them. The wind was also blowing toward the dogs. And it told them this oncomer was no human. Wherefore, instead of slinking back into their hiding place, they stood inquiringly waiting its approach.

Through the undergrowth lurched an eighteen-month-old bull;—fat, powerful, lumbering. From a farm three miles away he had strayed; after trampling nearly to death the man who had tended him since birth—the man who deemed him still a harmless calf.

His temper and his nerves had been stirred up by this attempt at slaughter. He had been goaded by fear of the other farmhands who had swarmed forth with pitchforks and staves to beat him away from his prey. The young bull had taken to the woods.

Now, in teaching Bobby the Law, Jamie Mackellar had said nothing about cattle. And, at sight of this half-ton of food, Bobby became all wolf. He crawled forward, in an oblique course, toward the enemy; Lass as ever close behind him.

The bull either saw their moving bodies

through the dusk; or else got a whiff of their scent. For he halted; lowered his head; and pawed the forest mold. The dogs halted, too, and crouched alertly, watching.

Then, with no further warning, the angry bullock charged. Through the impeding underbrush he tore; down upon the two moveless dark forms.

The dogs had never been in a fight of this sort. There was no chance for rehearsal or for any sort of prearranged plan of campaign. Therefore, cruel old Mother Nature taught them what to do; even as she taught the first starving wolf; a million years ago.

By common consent, they drew apart from each other, to avoid the rush. The bull—as ever is the way of bulls—charged with his eyes tight shut.

As he hurtled past the spot he was aiming for, Bobby had him by the hind leg, just above the hock; and was grinding with all the strength and skill of his mighty jaws, through tough hide and tender flesh, in quest of the tendon.

Lass, less wise, had sprung for the throat. Her white fangs clove through loose-flapping folds of skin; to no lethal purpose. A single jerk of the bull's neck flung her aside, with a handful of skin and hair between her teeth.

At the same time, an agonized fling of the bit-

ten hindleg sent Bobby rolling over and over in the bushes; the breath knocked out of him. But at once he was up again.

The bull, maddened by his hurts, glared from one crouching tormentor to the other. Then, shutting his eyes again, he charged Bobby. And now—Lass having learned something from her first failure—both dogs were at the leg tendons.

For a moment, the three combatants thrashed madly about, in the twilight. Then the bull was free, for another charge. Five times he rushed, with shut eyes, at the elusive collies. Five times, his legs were slashed and nipped in that industrious quest for the all-important tendon.

Then, heaving and staggering, he ceased from his charges; and stared doubtfully at the two. He had had enough;—more than enough. He was through. He took a step backward.

Instantly, Lass was slashing at his sensitive nose, and keeping just out of reach of the terrible short horns and butting forehead. While she held him thus in momentary confused pause, Bobby found the way to the tendon he sought. The task was much easier; now that the foe was standing stock still and braced.

The bull spun about, to crush him. But he made only half of the desired turn. From some dismaying cause his right hindleg gave way, most agonizingly, under him. And he plunged to earth

with an impact that shook the bushes. Fiercely, the two dogs drove for the swaying throat.

The rest was slaughter.

Hungry as she was, Lassie lay down and panted heavily for a few minutes before beginning the feast. Bobby, his beautiful head on one side and his deepset dark eyes alight with sympathy, stood near her, waiting.

Of late, she tired much more easily than at first. Nor, except for short exertions, was she as swift and as wirily vigorous.

Soon, Lass got back her breath. And the mates feasted long and ravenously.

If search was made for the strayed bullock, that search did not extend as far as an undergrowth-choked section of Blake's Woods. And, for long thereafter, the larder of the runaway collies was replete with tender food.

The supply would have lasted still longer, had not the crows flocked to it, by day. Bobby drove these off, fifty times, between sunrise and dusk. But as often, they clamored back, greedily, to the banquet.

Then, on a morning, there was nothing left of the bullock, but a skeleton on whose few remaining shreds of flesh the crows alighted unchallenged.

They were unchallenged, because Lochinvar Bobby was risking exposure by foraging far from

the lair, and by broad daylight; and because Lass lay drowsily in a dim corner of that lair, with seven sleek, mouse-colored puppies, no larger than squirrels, nestling close to her furry body.

It was for this new family that Bobby had deserted his regular nocturnal habits; to scour the forests, by sunlight. Monstrous proud and self-important was the big dog, this day. And he hunted in rare good luck.

Rabbits are almost as silly as they are timid. Because, for so many days past, their collie foes had not pursued them, they seemed to imagine the dogs had departed from Blake's Woods or else that they had lost their taste for bunnies. Back to their old feeding grounds trooped numbers of the cottontails.

Bobby found one of them—a good big fellow, at that—before he had quested for an hour. Home to the dance platform he bore it in triumph. Ignoring the noisy crows, as being far beneath his notice on so great a day, he crawled through the hole into the dark lair, and laid his prize in front of Lass.

Then he sniffed in interested curiosity at the seven wriggling and squeaking babies. Their presence bewildered him; through all his vague pride. Dimly, he felt he must care for them and feed and guard them.

The responsibility which is ever-present with

wolf-fathers and practically never with dog-sire was heavy upon him. This, as a phase of hi return to the Wild.

Thanks to the ill-founded confidence of the rab bit-folk, foraging, for the next week or so, wa comparatively easy. But Bobby and Lass wer forced to travel farther afield than before i search of water. The puddly spring at the edg of Blake's Woods had gone dry. There was noth ing to drink, nearer than the creek, a half-mile t northward. And the drouth had shrunk thi creek to a mere trickle.

Then once more the bunnies vanished. To fin one of them, Bobby was forced to range severa miles afield.

He hunted alone nowadays—or nowanights— for Lass stayed at home; seldom wanderin farther from the lair than the drying creek.

There was no longer any fun for Lochinva Bobby in these nights of hunting. For they car ried him far; and more than once they carried hin into real or fancied peril, by delaying his retur to the lair until well after sunrise.

But it did not occur to him to shirk his new duties. Apart from his utter devotion to his mate—a devotion more common among highbred collies than most people realize—he had that odd sense of responsibility toward the pups. And this sense, as I have said, was all wolf.

It was sweet to crawl wearily into the den, on his return from a thirty-mile run, and to drop at Lass's feet the rabbit or partridge he had brought home.

It was sweet to hear her tail beating glad welcome among the dried leaves of the nest when he drew near, and her little whimper of greeting as they touched noses.

It was amusing, as the weeks passed on, to watch the clumsy antics of the puppies—as large now as rabbits—as they tumbled over him or over their mother; or strove to play with one another after the manner of stiff-jointed patent toys.

Yes, if life meant new work it also meant strange new interests. And if again and again Bobby's heart was racked by longing for his lost master, yet his present ties held him back from returning to the haunts of men, now that Jamie had disappeared.

In the early springtime dusk the furry family would come out from the lair and chance an hour of fading daylight in the open; the sire and dam lying comfortably at ease amid the undergrowth while their babies gamboled awkwardly around them or essayed staggery little excursions for a few yards into the woods on either side.

Lass watched these exploring trips with real worry. Seldom did she allow them to continue for any distance, before jumping to her feet and

HEALDSBURG PUBLIC LIBRARY

heading off the creeping wanderer and nosing it back into the family group.

All her time and all her devotion were taken up nowadays, by these fluffy babies of hers. She had scarce a thought for her once-idolized mate except when he brought food home. Nor would she follow him for a single mile from her precious pups.

Presently, Bobby seemed to note this change of heart; and it saddened him. He was too big of soul to visit any resentment on the youngsters that had stolen Lass's devotion from him. Yet pathetically he strove to coax her to romps, as of yore; and to the long forest rambles they had both enjoyed so keenly. Failing, he began to brood.

He lost the gay dash that had been his. He took to moping. Which is as bad for a collie as for a human.

One night he set forth, as usual, on his long quest for food. He coursed the forest and the hills beyond, for twenty miles; drawing blank at every covert except one, and missing his prey there by a hair's breadth when the bunny dived into a bowlder crack whither the dog could not follow. Tired and hungry, at gray dawn Bobby turned back toward the ten-mile-distant lair.

He had not loped a half mile when he was thrown violently on his side. This by reason of

planting one careless hind foot on the flange of a well-hidden fox trap.

Of old, Bobby would have caught the scent of this trap and would have detoured it. But long dwelling with humans had blunted in a measure the wolf instinct that had been his as a masterless puppy. And he had stepped straight into the masked snare.

The steel jaws caught his foot, slantingly. They drove through the skin and they held fast. But they did not break the bone or so much as cut a tendon.

Nevertheless, the spring would not release its hold; in spite of all Bobby's plunges. Nor did the slender steel chain. Nor did the deep-driven stake to which it was fixed. The dog was a prisoner.

Daylight came up, before he ceased his mad thrashing about. Then rose the sun and slipped high and higher in the skies. The morning was half spent before the farmhand who had set the trap remembered to visit it.

To his incredulous dismay the yokel found a gigantic tawny-and-white collie stretched at full length at the chain's farthest span, panting for breath.

The man chirped to him. Bobby did not reward the salute by so much as a glance. He seemed too worn out to move.

The man took an appraising look at him, figuring mentally on the possible reward for so magnificent a dog, if the brute were not already too far gone to revive.

Then he bent to open the trap. Later it would be time to try to resuscitate its helpless victim.

As the steel jaws were pried free from the bleeding foot the inert Bobby came to life. Scarce had the edges cleared his paw when he was up.

He sprang from the ground with lightning swiftness; and, in practically the same motion, he whirled across the short distance between the trap and the nearest line of bushes.

Into this shelter he slid, as noiselessly as a ghost; as the astonished farmhand made a belated rush at him. Still on pads of silence, oblivious of the pain and swelling in his torn foot, the collie sped at top speed across the miles of woodland that lay between himself and the lair.

A queer worry—a mystic instinct—scourged him on. Twice he sprang across brooks. But, though he was parched for thirst, he did not pause to drink. And ever, as he ran, that same mysterious terror waxed stronger and more and more agonizingly compelling.

At last he was in Blake's Woods. Then he was at the mouth of the lair. At sound of his approach seven squealingly falsetto voices raised

hunger chorus. But Lass's welcoming whimper as not among them. Lass was not there. Even efore he stooped to peer in at the opening, obby's scenting powers told him she was gone. he hungry puppies had crawled out of their nest nd were sprawling about in the open.

For a moment Bobby stood there, his dark eyes ouded with misery. Then, as ever, his collie rain and resourcefulness came to his aid. Nos- ils to ground he began to course.

Instantly he picked up Lass' trail. It was fresh, mongrel puppy could have followed it.

Here, not an hour ago, Lass had trotted. Her ate had not come home, her babies were ngry, and there was no one but herself to for- ge for them.

Before she had run a quarter mile she had ught the scent of food. True, it was food from hich Bobby had once driven her; but he was not ere now to push her aside from it. And, in any se, mother instinct was a billionfold stronger an obedience.

Out of the woods and straight to the nearest rm she went. The first outbuilding she came was the chicken coop. It was the work of a oment for her to butt open the crazy door of and of another moment to drive her teeth into e fattest hen.

But, as usual, it proved easier to get into trouble

than to get out of it. The chickens set up a mo
godless racket. A man came running from t
adjacent barn; just as the third fowl succumb
to Lass's pounce.

Despite her futile efforts he grabbed t
snarling collie by the nape of the neck and yank
her out of the coop.

The county law indemnifies a poultry own
for birds killed by stray dogs. Instead of brai
ing Lass, as was his first impulse, the man sh
her into an empty corncrib, six feet abovegroun
and left her there until he could drive to the vi
lage and bring back with him the local constab
as witness to the damage and to its perpetrator.

There in the dusty recesses of the crib, hig
on wooden posts with a tin pan at the top of eac
to keep out rats, the luckless collie ran from sic
to side, biting and scratching at the slats in fur
ous attempts to get out.

And there Lochinvar Bobby found her.

Bobby circled the crib; leaping high and seek
ing vainly to get a foothold on its sides. Las
whined plaintively; scratching at the thick sla
and throwing herself against them in a frenzy o
dread.

Then all at once Bobby ceased his franticall
useless efforts. Again he stood moveless, seem
ingly deaf to his mate's whimpering cries. An
at the climax of despair came his idea.

Man in dire extremity runs to his God for aid. To the dog all men are gods. That does not mean he worships them all or has any use for the majority of them. Still, they are gods and he knows it—infinitely wiser and stronger and more resourceful than himself.

Thus it was that Lochinvar Bobby, in the agony of fear for his mate, turned to the only gods he knew of.

His personal god, Jamie Mackellar, was gone. But there were other gods, not strangers to him—gods for whom he had a mild liking, gods who had made much of him. These Beldencroft folk, rather than any strangers, would be likely to help him in his moment of stark need.

Without another backward look at the mate he was apparently deserting to her doom, Bobby went into action.

Head down, feet flying, he flashed across the clearing; heading in a bee line for Midwestburg.

Jamie Mackellar, at the end of eight weeks, had been able to hobble about on a cane.

As soon as he had come to complete consciousness, at Beldencroft, his first query had been for Bobby; and kennelmen were sent forth to hunt the city for the dog.

A policeman disbanded the hunt by telling one of the searchers that a big brown collie that morn-

ing had become confused in quest of a lost master, in the thick of traffic at the Main and State Street crossing, and had been run over and killed by a motor car.

The description seemed to fit Bobby, even to the mud-covered coat. Forgetting that scores of dogs, hunting their lost masters, are killed in that way, the kennelman went no further into the matter; but returned home and sent Jamie's fever soaring three degrees by telling him Bobby was run over and dead.

On a stiflingly hot noon time in late June, Jamie Mackellar was making his hobbling round of the kennels; when a furry catapult hurled itself past the corner of the driveway and flung itself bodily upon him.

"Bobby!" blithered the dumfounded Jamie, in an ecstasy of incredulous rapture, "*Bobby,* lad!"

For an instant, the deliriously happy man and the screamingly enraptured collie were all over each other. Kennelmen came running up. One of them telephoned the main house; and Rufus G. Belden lumbered to the kennels in person, to verify the miracle.

"Bobby!" Mackellar was yelling, as he squeezed the breath out of the squirming vibrant maniac that galloped hysterically about him, flinging itself again and again on his chest. "Bobby, boy, is it the wraith of you; or did you lie when you

said you were killed? Oh, but it's new life, to see your worthless old self again! It——. What ails your poor foot, there, Bobby? It's all cut! I——"

It was then that Bobby recovered from the mad delight of finding his supposedly vanished master, and remembered why he had come to Beldencroft. In an instant his wild exuberance was gone,—gone so suddenly that Jamie broke off, astonished, in his own incoherent words of welcome.

Seizing Mackellar by the coat hem, the dog braced himself and tugged. Then, he let go and ran a short distance toward the highroad; looking back appealingly and making the air echo with his frantic barks.

As all dog men know, this behavior means but one thing.

Jamie Mackellar not only knew dogs in general but he knew Bobby in particular. He knew that in the very minute of their reunion Lochinvar Bobby would never have sought thus to make his master follow him away; except for some tremendously vital reason.

Every line of the collie's body, every intonation of his frenziedly pleading bark spoke of fearful need. Jamie limped after him. The dog, at his master's first step, galloped up the drive, to the gates; and turned again to bark entreaty.

"What's the matter?" asked Rufus G., blinking

perplexedly at the eager dog and at the limpingly following Mackellar.

"He wants me to go somewhere with him, sir," called Jamie over his shoulder. "And he wants it mighty bad. See, he's starting off down the turnpike. With a poor cut foot, at that!"

"And you're going to strain that bum leg of yours, by chasing after a dog; just because he wants you to take him for a walk?" scoffed Belden.

"If you'd get a look at those eyes of his, sir, or if you'd try to read his bark, you'd know it was something bigger'n that," called back Jamie. "Bobby's never yet played the fool or made a fool of me. He needs me. I don't know why. But I'm going."

Belden grunted. Then, as Mackellar started down the road after the hastening Bobby, the great Rufus G. gave an order to one of the men.

Two minutes later a touring car came to a halt behind the plodding Jamie.

"Here!" ordered Rufus G. from the tonneau. "Hop in. If you're going to be idiot enough to follow that beast across the continent, you may as well do it without putting your leg out of business."

Jamie obeyed.

Bobby had paused worriedly. Then he had run on for a few more tentative steps. As the car

followed, he understood. And, no longer troubling to slacken his pace or to look back appealingly, he set forth at a sweeping run.

Half an hour later, the car stopped in a farm dooryard. The place was deserted: the farmer having taken his wife along on his drive to the village.

Bobby did not wait for his excited master or for the openly guying Rufus G. to get out of the car. Along the dooryard he sped, coming to a halt at the foot of a corncrib.

Around this he galloped, whining. He tried to climb the six-foot ladder to its door; but he fell back. From the crib's interior came an answering whimper.

At sound of his mate's call, Bobby flashed back to the car, whence Mackellar was descending; and caught Jamie again by the coat.

"He's got something in that corncrib he wants to show us," ventured Belden, seeking to mask his aroused interest. "A cat he's treed there, most likely. Or a skunk. He——"

"No, sir," denied Jamie, mounting the ladder and peeping through the slat openings. "A collie."

He lifted the crib's door latch, to get a better view of the captive. Lass saved him the trouble of opening the door. For she flung herself against

it and catapulted out into space; almost knocking Mackellar from the ladder.

Striking ground as lightly as a panther, Lass scarce waited to gather herself up; before starting off across the landscape, like a golden streak. She did not give Bobby so much as a glance as she whizzed past him.

Only once in her flight did she slacken speed. That was when her flying feet bore her past the hencoop. The three slain fowls had been laid in a row on the ground outside the coop, for the constable to see.

Barely checking her stride, Lass lowered her head and snatched up one of these hens; as she ran. Then she was off, with the speed of wind, for Blake's Woods.

Bobby had started after her, as she began her race. But, in a hundred yards, he hesitated and came to an irresolute stop.

He looked back at his master; his deep-set eyes abrim with appeal. Then he looked after his worshiped mate and took a step or two to follow her.

But of a sudden he paused again, with a low cry whose pain went even to the heart of the wondering Belden.

With something ridiculously akin to a sob in his furry throat the great dog turned and walked slowly back to where Mackellar stood. There,

shaking as if with a chill, Lochinvar Bobby laid himself down; his classic head across Jamie's boot.

He had made his choice; the choice that threatened to tear the heartstrings out of him.

Man had conquered. Bobby was turning his back on his loved mate and on his brood and deserting everything his wolf nature craved; for the sake of the master who was his god.

There he lay, quivering, and with that strange sobbing sound in his throat; his head athwart Jamie's muddy boot, his tear-filled dark eyes lifted to Mackellar's face in sorrowful adoration.

There was a pause. Even the voluble Rufus G. could not think of anything funny to say.

Then Jamie cleared his throat and said:

"I—I think I understand, sir. I think I get it all. I—I know Bobby, you see. And I know a bit about collies, at large. Likewise, I remember the platform where Bobby used to live. And I'm going there.

"Bobby, boy, 'tis a fearsome thing to see a creature turn from its mate to its god! A fearsome thing, Bobby, lad; be the creature nothing but a dog! How many humans would have the religion to do it, d'ye speir? How many? But ye'll not have to make the choice, I'm thinking, Bobby. Not if I'm right in guessing what we'll find under yon platform. Ye're luckier, that way,

Bobby, than a lot of humans. Or—or, aiblins, ye're not. Who but the dear God knows? Come along!"

He laid a five-dollar bill beside the two remaining dead chickens. Then he set forth on his quest.

"Where are you going?" demanded Rufus G., as Jamie stumped off with Bobby beside him.

"Up yonder into the woods, a piece, sir," said Jamie. "Don't bother to follow, if it's too hard sledding for the car. I'll——"

"Shut up!" ordered Belden, with the exquisite courtesy of his kind. "I'm playing this hand out. Though it makes no manner of sense to me, any of it. Wait till Peters brings up the car. I'm with you."

Striking the rutted and overgrown old picnic road, the machine bumped its way into Blake's Woods. Bobby was cuddled close against Jamie's side, in the tonneau. The dog kept staring up at his master with growing excitement; as Mackellar gave directions to the disgruntled chauffeur.

At a turn in the underbrush, Jamie jumped up; pointing eagerly and shouting:

"I was right, Bobby, lad! I was right! See! And your mate goes with your bairns to Beldencroft, too. I'll buy her if her owner ever shows up. See, sir!"

He was gesturing toward a gap in the bushes where showed a bit of the decaying platform, with a ragged hole in its side. At the mouth of this hole lay Lassie, her seven babies crowding around her furry sides, as very daintily she tore apart a large and obese hen.

Bobby awoke the echoes with a thunder of ecstatic barks.

"H'm!" mused Rufus G. in another ten minutes as he and Jamie loaded the pups into the tonneau, along with their effusively happy parents. "Talk about Scotch thrift! Here you lose Bobby for four months, and you get him back with 700 per cent interest—800 per cent, counting his mate. Lord, but I wish I could lose a block of railroad bonds, that way, for four months!"

CHAPTER VII: FELLOW-SINNERS

FOR the five years that Champion Lochinvar Bobby and Jamie Mackellar had been chums, there had been one month, every autumn, when the two turned their backs on civilization and on duty; and hiked forth into the wilderness, together.

Even in the old days, when he was an underpaid truckman—long before he became kennel-manager for the august Rufus G. Belden—Jamie had allowed himself this annual month of hunting and fishing and forest life.

Pack on shoulder and weighted down with gun and rod-case and other paraphernalia, he had boarded a northbound spur-line train at Midwestburg, and had fared fifty miles into the wilderness. Thence, a half-day's tramping brought him to the tiny lakeside hut he had built.

For four untroubledly blissful weeks, thereafter, he would hunt the November forests and troll over the little lake's icy surface; in search of food and of surcease from mundane worries. At the end of the month he would reappear at Midwestburg, brown and hard and eager for work.

When he went to Beldencroft, as kennel-manager, it was with the understanding that this November holiday should still be his.

It was the time when he could most easily be spared from his job at the kennels. Dogshows are few, in November. The collies have weathered the coat-destroying and eczemic summer and are getting into final bloom for the winter shows. If ever the manager of a big collie kennel can spare a month from his work, November is that month.

Jamie's glorious dark-brown collie, Lochinvar Bobby, went on these jaunts with his master; purely as a chum. A collie's utilitarian value, on a hunting-and-fishing trip, is several degrees less than nothing. But, at the drowsy end of a long day's shooting or trolling, it was pleasant for Jamie to have the big dog loaf beside him at the campfire; and sleep at his feet on the bough-and-blanket bed. The man and the dog were inseparable comrades.

This month in the wilds meant as much to Bobby as to his master. Remember, for nearly a year, in puppyhood, Bobby had lived in the forest, as best he might; growing up like any young wolf; and subsisting off the country. And these returns to his early life were a joy to him.

One year, as November drew nigh, Mackellar began as usual to spend his spare moments in refurbishing fish-tackle and in cleaning his shot-

gun and loading 12-gauge shells. Bobby observed the signs of preparation. And he rejoiced, loudly and friskingly, at prospect of the month of wilderness life with his deity.

But Rufus G. Belden watched these same signs with far less approval.

"That bum leg of yours is barely well," he warned Jamie, scowling down on the little man and at the heaps of camping paraphernalia strewn around the kennel-manager's veranda. "It isn't more than a month or two since you stopped favoring it, every time you walked a mile. A compound fracture, like that, is a nasty thing to trifle with. Suppose the leg goes back on you, while you're all alone off there in that God-forsaken neck of the woods, with nobody near? How do you suppose you're going to——?"

"The leg's not going back on me, sir," expostulated Jamie. "I've been walking on it for some thirty-odd years; and it never failed me but the once. And that was by reason of a bit of ice and a skidding truck. You can't blame the good old leg for that. It's well again, now. Besides, I'm not going to be 'all alone.' I'll have Bobby along."

"Quite so!" assented Rufus G. with the elephantine sarcasm that Jamie loathed. "I'd forgotten that. To be sure, you'll have Bobby. If the leg goes back on you, he can set it; and save

you a surgeon-fee. Or he can pick you up in his teeth and trot back home with you, a matter of sixty-four miles. So you'll be perfectly safe."

"Yes, sir," said Jamie, trying to speak calmly. "Perfectly safe. Though I take it kind that you should fash yourself over my welfare. We'll be back, Bobby and I, by the first of December at latest."

"A Scot for obstinacy," grumbled Rufus G. "And a Scot for pinning faith in a helter-skelter collie's ability to make everything all right! All you Scots are the same. Why, take that 'Twa Dogs' jingle, by your whiskey-swigging poet-chap, Willie Burns, and——"

"*Willie* Burns!" snapped Jamie, wonted respect failing him, for the moment, under this dire sacrilege to the poet who was his hero. "*Willie* Burns! Losh! Syne ye'll be havering of 'Isidor' Shakespeare or 'Charley' the Baptist! And, as for Bobby Burns being a whiskey-swigger, let me tell you——"

"All right! Oh, all right!" laughed Belden, enraptured that his trick had gotten a rise out of the punctilious little manager. "I take it back. And now that I've jarred you loose from your smugness, will you or won't you be sensible about risking accident, away off there, with your new-mended leg?"

"I will, sir," answered Jamie, his respectful self once more.

"And you'll give up the fool trip, for this year?" Belden pressed his advantage.

"No, sir," meekly replied Jamie. "I'll not. With all deference, sir. 'Twould disappoint Bobby, too, if we didn't go; after I'd promised him. So, by your leave we'll start, Monday. Like we laid out to, sir. Thanking you."

The single-track railroad ended at a decrepit station. Debarking, and with his heavy luggage swung deftly over his back, Jamie Mackellar struck out through the trail-path; for the half-day distant lake and the hut. At his side, and in front and in wide circles about the man, ranged Lochinvar Bobby; puppyishly happy in his new freedom.

Jamie did not halt, until the long uphill hike ended in a view of his hut.

Apart from elation at reaching the scene of his holiday, Mackellar was jubilant that his leg had given him no trouble at all, during the stiff tramp.

He had not misjudged the completeness of his cure. He was fit for all-day walking or for crag-climbing. He was as good as new. And he smiled in tolerant derision, at memory of Belden's warning.

Dusk was settling in. From the north crept down the early November twilight; and with it

the bracing chill of a November night. Jamie slung his luggage into a corner of the hut, to be put in order later on. Then he busied himself with lighting the fire and starting supper and making ready his bunk.

With a nod of self-gratulation, he noted the towering pile of firewood he had whiled away three hard-raining days in cutting and stacking; at the end of his last year's sojourn. He peered inquiringly into the tiny sunk-bucket spring at the threshold of the hut; and found it was as limpid and as full as of old.

All was as he had left it. Except for a possible stray hunter, nobody had gone past the desolate spot for a full year.

While the kettle was boiling, Mackellar went out and cut balsam tips for his bed. Then, as darkness came, he lighted the one lamp in the cupboard; and unpacked and arranged his luggage, with the care of a true camper.

"There, now, Bobby, lad!" he exclaimed, as he viewed his completed work. "The shack is shipshape and grand. It may not be 'as dainty as a maiden's boodore'; like the song says. But it's clean and it's ready for use. And the few 'maidens' boodores' I ever chanced to see, was more like hog-pens; the way everything was higgledy-piggledied in the dresser-drawers and on the floor and the tables and shelves, and what

not. Maybe the song-chap took his daughter's word for how her room looked, Bobby. He——"

Jamie, as he talked, had mounted a tottery three-legged stool, to stow away the empty duffle-bag on a top shelf. The stool succumbed to the weather and the wormholes of many seasons. It collapsed under Jamie's meagre weight. To the floor crashed the man; his recently-healed leg doubling under him.

Bobby had been paying only scant heed to Mackellar's disconnected talk; being actively interested only when his own name was spoken.

But the tumble, the splintering of rotten wood and then the queer little sinister sound as of the muffled cracking of a twig—these brought him over to the fallen Jamie; in a single bound.

Mackellar was lying very still indeed; with the rebroken leg bent under his limp body.

For a minute he lay so; while the worried collie whimpered and sniffed at him and patted the moveless heap tentatively with one white paw. Then, Mackellar shook from head to foot with unbearable anguish; and gagged, to keep himself from screaming aloud.

Bobby's worry changed to acute grief. Frantically, he circled the writhing little man; whining and sobbing in an excited undertone and trying to lick the distorted white face.

Now, one of the reasons why Jamie Mackellar

possessed the boundless respect of his dog was because the man merited that respect. He had a cool head and a quick brain and a perfect nerve. These came to his aid, after that first few moments of impotent agony. And, crippled as he was, both mind and body went into action.

At once he realized what had befallen him; as well as the more hazardous aspects of his plight. He had broken his leg again. He was many miles from aid. He had no one to rely on, except himself. The desperation of his condition cleared the pain-mists from his wits.

"Here, Bobby, lad!" he panted, reaching up and burying his fingers in the collie's ruff. "Get me to the door, Bobby. To the *door!*" he repeated.

Bobby understood. Always, Jamie had talked to him as to another human. And few were the simple words of every-day use whose general meaning Bobby did not know.

He knew he had been bidden go to the door. And, head down, he made for the threshold. Half relying on his hold upon the ruff, half helping himself along on the floor by means of his free hand, with every inch of the journey an unspeakable torture, Jamie reached the doorway.

Gritting his teeth, he thrust an arm out to the adjacent hillock of firewood. Guided by the lamp's rays, he selected two long flat slabs of

hemlock—flotsam from a disused sawmill on the far side of the lake. With these and his sheath-knife and strips from a spare blanket, he proceeded to set his leg.

It was a hideous task. Twice, he allowed himself the luxury of interrupting it by fainting. But, recovering, he kept stubbornly on.

He had set the broken legs of dogs, and once the leg of a calf; after seeing a veterinary perform a like feat. And he had seen a surgeon set the smashed knee of a fellow-passenger, in a railroad wreck. Thus, he had a more than rudimentary idea of the process. But, never had he dreamed that it or anything else could hurt so.

With splints and blanket-bandage he wrought. Lochinvar Bobby, close beside him, looked on; his deep-set dark eyes abrim with misery and with futile yearning to comfort his tortured master. After a century of locked-teeth grim effort, the job was done. And, for a third time, Jamie swooned.

He came to himself, to find Bobby standing in the doorway in front of him, classic muzzle to the sky; waking the forest silences with a salvo of thunderous barks.

Plainly, the dog realized the situation was beyond his own poor powers; and he was seeking to summon aid.

"A—a good idea, Bobby, lad!" panted Jamie. "But—but I've a better. Here!"

As Bobby turned, Jamie pointed across to the gun-case.

"Fetch it!" he commanded.

Bobby, in obedience, picked up the heavy canvas case and carried it to his master.

"Now—now, yon bag," gasped Jamie, pointing again. "No, no! Not that. The other one."

From a low shelf, Bobby dragged the valise which held Mackellar's cartridges. As it swung off the table, its weight tore it free from the dog's unprepared grip; loosening one of Bobby's curved eye-teeth in the wrench.

Heedless of the sharp hurt, the collie picked up the fallen satchel and dragged it along the floor to the twistingly waiting Jamie. Gravely, he watched the man put together the gun and slip two shells into the breech.

Pointing the weapon out through the doorway, with difficulty, Jamie fired twice into the darkness. The recoil was anguish to him. Then, nimbly reloading, he fired twice more; and so on until a dozen shells had been emptied in fast succession.

"There, Bobby!" he groaned, laying down the hot gun and sinking back to the floor. "If there's a soul within two miles, they'll—they'll know a man don't blaze away twelve times, in the pitch

dark, just for the fun of it. I'll get as—as good results that way, Bobby, as if I fired every shell in the bag."

But, when the waiting minutes had stretched to an hour and when he had twice repeated his fusillade, Jamie Mackellar became sickly aware that his signal was not to meet with any response.

Back, a few miles to westward, were five or six scattered wilderness farms. These were the only habitations, except the more distant railroad settlement, within a radius of nearly twenty miles. And Jamie knew it.

With a sigh that tried not to be a groan, he made ready to spend the night in what comfort he could.

Luckily, the one-room hut was a bare ten feet in any direction. Also, the hearth and the pallet of boughs and blankets were within short rolling distance from the door.

Thus, by agonizing shifts of position, varied by the use of Bobby as errand boy, the stricken Jamie made shift to prepare coffee and some sort of a meal—a meal which tasted like ashes in his dry mouth—and to settle down for the sleepless night of torment.

When at last the lamp was out, the man and the collie lay side by side in the smoldering fire's glow; and Bobby fell asleep. More than once he woke anxiously at sound of an unchokable groan

or a shudder of pain from his master. But always a reassuring word from Jamie sent him back to uneasy slumber again.

Bobby was utterly unhappy. He did not know just what had befallen his god. But he knew Jamie was sore hurt and that Bobby himself could do nothing to help him. Wherefore, the dog's great heart was sore with grief.

Late, very late, as Bobby was roused for perhaps the tenth time by a stifled groan from Jamie, the man patted whimsically the head pressed so solicitously against his arm; and said:

"Bobby, lad, the Arctic nights are only six months long. Happy Arctickers, Bobby! This measly night has lasted six lifetimes, already. And it isn't half ended, yet. Bobby—John Knox and Calvin, and the rest of them, missed a grand chance to save souls; when they painted hell as just a trifling lake of brimstone, Bobby. If they'd said it was an all-night-long with a bust leg, Bobby, they'd have had the whole world converted before the next Sabbath Day, Bobby;—just out of sheer fright. D'ye mind how pawkily I answered the Boss when he told me not to risk this, Bobby, boy? . . . Oh, go to sleep again, Bobby! Ye mean well. Ye mean grand. Well I ken that. But when you try to get sympathetic-like, you bunt me with that honest old head of yours; and it jars me all over. Mostly in the leg,

Bobby. Go to sleep. I'm here awake, if anything happens. One waker is enough."

By morning, fever had set up its habitation in the broken leg. But, by morning, Jamie had collected enough self-control to bear it. And he greeted the dawn with another twelve-cartridge volley. Then he sought to boil water for coffee. And here he met his first seemingly insuperable difficulty.

Thirstily, during his hours of sleepless pain, he had drained the water pail. It was empty. And it must be filled. But how?

The spring was close to the door. Yet it was out of reach of Jamie's arm. And he could not hoist himself over the ten-inch doorsill and around the corner of the lintel to roll to it. At best he could navigate only on the level; and then not without hanging to Bobby and worming along on his stomach; every inch a torture. As to reaching the five-foot distant spring, over the ten-inch barrier, it was impossible.

He must have water; not only to bathe his fire-hot leg and to make coffee, but also to assuage once more his intolerable fever-thirst.

Long he lay and planned. Then, he reached for the smaller of the two pails; and placed its handle between Bobby's jaws. He pointed to the spring. Instantly, Bobby trotted over to the

water and stood above it, the pail dangling between his teeth.

"Dip it in, Bobby!" commanded Mackellar, pantomiming the action as well as he could.

Bobby looked down at the spring, then back to his master. But a score of repetitions could not make him grasp the idea. He had no way of knowing that the dipping of a pail into a spring is one means of transporting water.

His dark eyes were pathetically wistful, as he sought vainly to grasp his master's meaning. He made several experimental moves, in reply to Jamie's gestures. But none of them carried out Mackellar's idea.

At last, with a resigned sigh, Jamie called the dog back to him.

"It's no use, Bobby, lad," said he, patting his disconsolate chum. "No use, Bobby, boy. I'd 'a' swore there wasn't a thing you hadn't the sense to do. But—well, the dear Lord made you a dog, after all; not a human. That's why you're such good comp'ny. Wait quiet, till I think of something better."

He lay still, the pain corrugations in his bald forehead reënforced by thought-wrinkles. Then, chirping to Bobby, he pointed out an extra blanket, rolled in a far corner. The collie brought it across to him; glad that at last there was some order he could comprehend.

Jamie fished a length of stout cord from his pocket. Painfully, he tied the blanket into a thick square. To one corner of this he tied what was left of the cord; knotting the cord's other end around his own wrist.

Then, with an effort that set his leg into a flaming torment, Mackellar tossed the wad of blanket at the spring.

The first cast was a miss. And several minutes passed before thirst goaded Jamie to the torment of a second throw. This time he was luckier or else more careful. For the blanket plopped down into the spring.

Jamie let it lie there for some little time, absorbing water; before he drew it back. Then, holding it above the pail, he wrung out the chilly contents into the receptacle.

The throw had netted him something more than three quarts of water. True, it was somewhat grimy of hue and was plentifully intermixed with fuzzy hairs. But it was water. And it was cold.

"Bobby, lad," he commented, "this is the kind of water we call a dog a beast for drinking."

The man thrust his hot face into the pail and drank noisily. When he raised his head from the long draught, there was scarce enough water left in the bottom of the pail to make the strong black coffee his weakened system craved.

The drinking problem was solved. The cooking problem was easier.

The woodpile was just beyond Jamie's reach—all except a few armfuls of split boards and fagots. But by pointing to the heap, and giving the needful orders, he was able to make Bobby drag to him one big stick after another, to keep the hearth-fire going. The dog entered eagerly into this new game. When a stick was too large for him to carry, he would take it by one end and haul it along.

Yet, as soon as Jamie ceased to point and to command, Bobby ceased his wood-carrying. Evidently, he had no idea at all that he was expected to continue or that his was the duty to supply firewood for the camp.

A little after sunrise, Jamie fished a pencil and an envelope-back out of his pocket. Lying on his stomach and using the uneven floor as a desk, he scrawled a few words, stating what had befallen him and where he was. This note he showed to Bobby. Then he tied it to the ring of the dog's collar.

"Go!" he ordered. "*Find* some one!"

Bobby understood this command, beyond question. Often, he had been sent to Belden or to one of the kennel men, with a note tied to his collar; and had brought back the reply. It was one of Bobby's favorite accomplishments.

Off he galloped. But, at the end of the first hundred yards, he came to a halt, and stared back, inquiringly; his head on one side.

Apparently, it had just occurred to him that this was a section of the world where none of the people familiar to him were likely to be found. He was in much doubt as to the person to whom the note was to be delivered.

"Over yon!" called Jamie, waving a feeble hand in the direction of the distant farms. "Give it to *some one!* Go!"

Off went Bobby; no longer hesitant. He understood. He was to travel in a certain direction and deliver the note to some human—presumably to any human he might find.

Thus, twice, had he been sent to a store, on the suburbs of Midwestburg; and had delivered a note to the clerks there. He had known what and where the store was. But the clerks had been strangers. So, now, he was going in the direction indicated by Jamie; and to give a message to some one he should find there.

For the best part of three miles galloped Lochinvar Bobby, before he met a human. Then, by scent and sound and soon by sight, he found a farmhand.

The farmhand was loafing along a rutted road, driving to pasture six gaunt cows. Up to him frisked Bobby.

The man looked wonderingly and somewhat in fear, at the huge dog advancing so swiftly toward him. The note was invisible. The collar's ring, as usual, had slipped down under Bobby's throat; where it was hidden from sight by a mass of ruff.

At the dog's galloping approach, the cows scattered and fled in every direction; some of them making threat-gestures with their horned heads as they cantered clumsily away.

Bobby paid no heed to them. His business was with the man. In his memory still lurked the stark anguish and need in Jamie's voice and gesture. His master was in frightful trouble. And, presumably, this fellow-human could be of use in some way. Up to the gaping farmhand bounded Lochinvar Bobby.

But the flight of the cows and the dog's undeviating rush had stirred the rustic into apprehensive wrath. Whirling his stick on high he brought it down with full force at the approaching collie's skull.

But Bobby's skull was not there when the blow fell. Ever distrustful of strangers, since his olden avoidance of them when he was living in the wild, Bobby had noted the glint in the man's eye and the tensing of his muscles. As the club whizzed downward, the dog dodged to one side with the lithe speed of a timber-wolf. The stick

smote the rutted road, so hard as to break in three.

Disarmed, the man made a frantic kick at the collie. Again, Bobby dodged; this time showing a menace-glimpse of white teeth. Ordinarily, a blow and a kick would have been punished by him with instant ferocity. But, he knew well he was on a terribly urgent errand; and that he had no right to gratify personal grudges.

Accordingly, he contented himself with avoiding the kick and with a fiercely warning growl. The man waited for no more. With a scrambling upward jump he caught the low-hanging branches of a scrub-oak that grew at the roadside; and he wiggled his way to the safety of the higher boughs.

There he crouched, huddled in a heap, like a sick raccoon, while the puzzled dog stood in the road beneath and looked up at him.

The man's yells soared to high heaven. And in another few minutes Bobby caught the sound and scent of a newcomer. A second man was rounding the bend of the road;—a man who ran with a rheumatic gait and who bellowed questions of the treed rustic.

Up to this oncoming human trotted Lochinvar Bobby; still hoping that some one would detach the note from his collar. But at a squalled sentence from the first man, this second arriva

caught up two heavy stones and hurled them viciously at the dog. Bobby dodged the first stone. The second grazed his side, bruising and angering him.

It was very evident these humans were in no mood to find and read notes and then to praise the messenger. The man had stopped and was hunting for another stone to hurl. Bobby, as a last resort, ran up to him and caught his coat-hem, in appeal. The man kicked frenziedly at the dog; and then, his nerve deserting him, broke for the thorny shelter of a locust copse.

Bobby blinked from one to the other of the gesticulating and panic-smitten yokels. Something, somehow, had gone wrong. He could not deliver his message. He could not lure these men along with him, to Jamie's rescue. There was nothing to do but to go back to camp. There was no sense in continuing to approach people who first assailed him and then ran away. Moreover, his loyal heart ached at the absence from his suffering master.

And, back galloped Bobby to the lakeside hut.

Jamie, lying in a stupor of fever and pain, was wakened from a topsy-turvy dream of leading his throbbing leg around the ring at a dogshow. He was roused by the softly cold touch of Bobby's nose on his hot cheek.

Mackellar's first gesture was toward the dog's

collar. The note still dangled from the ring. Pointing authoritatively toward the far-off railroad settlement, Jamie said.

"Go!"

And, unrebuffed by his former ill-luck, Bobby went.

Less than an hour later, among the few loafers and roustabouts at the railroad's station-shack, sprang up a screech of "Mad dog!"

This because a huge and excited collie had rushed into the center of the group of idlers on the platform; and had seized the station agent by a corner of his jumper and striven to draw him along by main force.

The agent shed his jumper and ran backward out of reach. Whereat the dog, barking in frantic appeal, trotted a few steps toward the trail; and then, coming back, sought to pull along a second member of the group, this time by the trouser-leg.

In another quarter-minute the settlement was bawling "Mad dog!" and bombarding the unhappy Bobby with every available missile. One or two more resourceful folk ran indoors for fire-arms. But, before they could bring these into action, Bobby had seen the futility of his efforts and had fled into the woods, beyond range.

The avengers followed him—or sought to—for some distance. Still, at intervals, hooting their

slogan of "Mad dog!" they gave noisy chase.

Ever at the back of the human throat and in the illogical fear-swamps at the bottom of the human brain lurks this insensate cry of "Mad dog!"

At sight of a sick or lost or frightened cur, the cry is ready to burst forth; and a crowd flocks gleefully to the slaughter. Though there is perhaps not an average of one genuine case of rabies a year in any state in the Union, yet thousands of harmless and friendly dogs are slain each season on the altar of this idiotic fetish.

But Bobby was not of the number. He had no notion of letting these rackety humans catch him. Thanks to his early woodlore, he melted into the undergrowth and was lost to sight; before he had traveled a hundred feet. Back to Jamie he sped; sick with fear for his master and with hopelessness of bringing him aid.

Mackellar was no longer drowsing feverishly, when Bobby at last came in sight of the hut.

The dog paused in amaze at the change in his master. Being only a collie, the various phenomena of pain and fever were strange to him. At first glance, it appeared that the man had ceased to suffer and was hilarious.

No longer was Jamie's face a greenish white. It was deeply flushed. His eyes were shining. His set leg propped in front of him, he was sitting

bolt upright in the doorway. As Bobby drew near, Mackellar burst gleefully into song, interspersed with fragments of high-pitched speech.

"Now's the day an' now's the hour!
See the front o' battle lour!
See advance proud Edward's power,
Chains an' slav——!

"Hech, Bobby, lad!" he broke off. "Whaur ye been, the while? I've missed ye, sair. . . .

"The tither was a plowman's collie
He was a gash an' faithful tyke
As ever lap a sheugh or dyke.
His honest, sonsie, bawsn't face
Aye gat him friends in ilka place.
His——

"That's you, Bobby, boy, if ever was. And to think of him maundering of *Willie* Burns;—the blasphemer! . . ."

His voice trailed drunkenly away.

Bobby had stood, in growing consternation; at sight and sound of this human who had his loved master's aspect and voice and yet who, by some horrible change, was not his master but a stranger. The collie shivered all over, and came creeping up to Jamie; crawling close to the ground, his dark eyes clouded with trouble and perplexity.

Sighing, the great dog laid his head on Mackellar's foot.

The contact started Jamie from his brief hiatus. Squinting dazedly down at Bobby, he laid his hand on the collie's head and stared owlishly at some invisible person behind him.

Through his nose he chanted, with quavering unction, to the old Covenanter tune of "Balerma":

"Our life comes from a thousand springs
And dies if one goes wrong.
Strange that a harp of thousand strings
Should keep in tune so long!"

He fell silent; but for only a moment.

His glassy eye strayed once more to the shiveringly miserable collie. In a sharp businesslike voice, he addressed an unseen person at Bobby's side.

"What's your dog's number?" he rasped.

Then, rebukingly:

"Can't you teach him better ring manners than to lie down whilst he's being judged? . . . Walk your dogs, please! That's enough. Bring yours forward, alongside this one, on the block. So! I——"

He broke off, again, in his muttered ramblings. Through the delirium-haze came to him a whirring sound that struck him as irresistibly funny. He glanced upward.

Over the lake, and flying low, an aeroplane was approaching. At sight of it, Bobby sprang to his feet, barking in a deafening ecstasy of appeal. Jamie laughed aloud; and waved a blanket-strip in merry greeting. To him the advent of this plane was one of the most mirth-evoking things in his career.

Howard Tapley, government forest ranger for that district, had received a telegram, the night before, from the all-powerful Rufus G. Belden; asking him to drop in on Jamie during one of his patrol trips; and to see that the little man was all right. Wherefore, at the outset of his day's patrol, Tapley had made a detour to include the lake and the hut.

Looking downward, now, as he passed, he saw a big dog barking up at him. Then he saw and recognized Jamie; lounging lazily in the cabin doorway. Mackellar was laughing and was waving to him in gay greeting. Assuredly, the man was not only all right, but in a mood of friendly merriment.

Tapley returned the wave; and flew on.

That night he telegraphed Belden that the kennel-manager was in fine health and spirits. In this season of forest fires, there was no time for the ranger to make unnecessary visits. And the hut lay some miles off his regular beat.

The next morning, Jamie Mackellar awoke,

pitiably weak and sick; but clear of head and with no faintest memory of anything that had occurred during his delirium.

He woke to find Lochinvar Bobby standing over him, like a mahogany-and-snow statue. Sleeplessly, the collie had stood guard, thus; for more than twenty hours. Now, at sight of his sane master, he went into wild rejoicings.

He danced about the supine Jamie; licking his face, yelping, patting at him with flying white paws. In his relief at his master's return to the body which had held that singing and mumbling stranger, the stately dog reverted to puppyhood, from the madness of his joy.

Jamie put up a trembling hand to Bobby's collar. The note was still there. On Bobby's flank was the graze of a rock. One of his white forelegs was cut by a broken bottle hurled at him by one of the station crowd.

Jamie knew Bobby.

He knew the ways of the average dogless human with a strange dog. And he guessed what had happened. Tearing up the note, he patted Bobby, remorsefully.

Then he began to take account of stock.

Being an old camper, it was Jamie's custom to "travel light." He had brought to the hut only enough pork and biscuit and flour to last him for two or three days; having planned to tramp to the

station store, when he should not be weighted down with his duffle bag and other camping outfit; and thence to pack to the hut the food needful to last out the remainder of his vacation.

This he had done in other years. It saved the almost impossible carrying of double weight on a single trip. But, now, that plan threatened to result in starvation for him.

"We're up against it, Bobby, lad," mused Jamie, as he went over, for the second time, the pittance of provisions in the hut. "Not that I'm honing for food. But I've got to eat it. Unless I want them to find my bones at a time when the soul of me is playing sweetly in Glory; on an Instrument of Ten Strings. By all chance, not a soul will look in on us, for another four weeks. I can't walk a step. Forbye, I can't so much as creep, without its half-murdering me, Bobby.

"There's a wee peckle of flour here; and maybe a pound or so of pork; and a hantle of coffee and a few beans and a can of condensed milk. And there's pepper and salt and sugar and the like;—none of them sustaining. They won't last me four weeks, Bobby. They'll not last me a half-week. To say nothing of victuals for yourself. How about it, Bobby, lad? What's the answer to that? D'ye ken? Ye do not. No more do I. There's water a-plenty. Thanks to the spring and to my braw natural gifts at blanket-casting.

And there's firewood and shelter. But that's all. How do we solve the eating-riddle?"

Bobby listened with grave interest; if with scant understanding. The sight and scent of food reminded him he was ravenous. But when he saw Jamie put back into a bag all the provisions except the coffee and one pilot biscuit, his spirits fell.

"I'm eating this biscuit, myself, Bobby," expounded Jamie. "Not that I'm hoggish. But you can live off the country; and I can't. You've done it before, Bobby; and you can do it again. Moreover, you've got to. Breakfast, Bobby! Go catch it! Breakfast! *Go!*

Now, here were words whose meaning was wholly familiar to Bobby. And the underlying earnestness in his master's tone set him athrill. Wheeling, he ran down the slope and into the forest.

Jamie noted the dog no longer galloped like a collie, but that he had assumed the slinking sidewise run of a wolf. He had been ordered to go and get a breakfast; and in getting it he must revert to the wild.

Jamie sank back on his blankets; nibbling the hard biscuit and sipping at his triply strong mug of black coffee.

Starvation awaited him. He knew that. He could see not one chance in a thousand of its pre

vention. Here he must stay, tied by the leg, until all the carefully hoarded food should be gone. Then——

At any rate, there was water; and he had brought his own full supply of coffee; remembering how poor was the stuff sold under that name at the station store. Also, his leg was just a little less intolerably agonizing than it had been.

He strove gallantly to push from his thoughts the inevitable hour when the wilderness and Mother Nature should cease to be his playmates and turn murderously upon him.

Through the tangled second-growth, silent as a ghost, slipped Lochinvar Bobby. His nostrils were working, every instant; sending their expert messages to the skilled brain.

Through the forest, in every direction, ran the tracks of foxes. And that, he knew, was why the scent of rabbits was absent. For, when a colony of foxes choose to haunt some particular district of the woodland, such rabbits as do not fall quick prey to them desert the neighborhood.

For two hours Bobby ranged; covering many miles of hill and wooded valley; of gorge and ridge and slope. And, at last, nine miles from the hut, he caught the scent he sought. Dropping to a walk, stomach to earth, he sniffed the windless air. Then, moving slowly toward a bunch of

dead grass between two bowlders, he made his charge.

Out from between the rocks, a bare inch ahead of Bobby's snapping jaws, bounced a fat rabbit; fleeing for dear life. Like a thunderbolt, Bobby was after it. And in less than twenty paces he had run down the confused and awkwardly dodging cottontail.

His foot on his prey, he bent over to enjoy his repast. He was cravingly hungry; for he had not eaten in more than twenty-four hours.

But, with his jaws still parted for the first mouthful, he paused. Of old he had foraged for his mate and for his helpless brood. And perhaps such memory brought back to him the vision of his stricken master, at the far-distant lakeside hut. Or possibly he obeyed only the impulse which bids good dogs bring to their masters the spoils of the chase.

In any event, his crunching teeth did not close rendingly upon the slain rabbit. Instead, he picked it up, with the fastidious daintiness of a collie; and set forth through the woods with his burden.

Perhaps forty minutes later, Bobby trotted out into the clearing and dropped at Jamie's feet a plump rabbit. Then he stood back, with wagging tail and eyes alight with fun, to watch Mackellar's reception of the gift.

Jamie praised his dog, loudly and long; petting him inordinately and telling him what a glorious old chum he was. Bobby was proud, past belief, in this adulation from his self-contained deity.

Jamie's effusiveness had a much more cogent purpose than mere gratitude. He knew dogs; as it is given to few humans to know them. He knew that this extravagant meed of praise would incite the adoring Bobby to earn further laudations by repeating the same exploit;—such being collie nature.

Here was a very real ray of hope for the starvation-threatened man. He could have shouted aloud from sheer reaction.

Jamie made shift to skin and dress and broil the rabbit. Then, he and Bobby sat down to a veritable feast. Every mouthful strengthened and heartened the invalid. By reason of his spare body's iron health, the fever had departed, to a great extent; and his system was rallying from the shock.

True, many weeks must pass before he could hope to stand on his broken leg, even with the aid of a crutch. But if the firewood should hold out and if Bobby could forage successfully for him, he might keep alive; until his wife or Belden, alarmed at his prolonged absence, should send out a search party. And Mackellar ate with something approaching relish

The meal over, man and dog snoozed in the warm Indian summer sunshine. The afternoon was half spent when they awoke. Then, his nerves twitching a little at the bare chance of failure, Jamie said loudly:

"Breakfast, Bobby! *Go!*"

At once he was ashamed of himself for having doubted his chum's brain-power. For, like a shot, Lochinvar Bobby was off amid the undergrowth; running wolf-like through the still forest.

He had ranged for barely a mile, when a scent assailed his nostrils.

A dog's sense of smell is miraculous. But no miracle was needed to catch this scent. A human, with chronic catarrh, could not have missed it.

Twice as a forest-ranging puppy and once when he and his collie mate had lived in the Wild, Bobby had encountered the same unforgettable scent; and had traced it to its source. The first occasion had been appallingly tragic to him. But its awful lesson had taught him—as it has taught hungry wolves—how to avoid a repetition of the tragedy and at the same time to secure a toothsome meal.

Swiftly, craftily, Bobby darted in pursuit of the odor's source.

In a bare two minutes, he came to a tiny glade. In the center of this, and crossing it in leisurely

fashion, was a furry animal about the size of a small cat. It had a long and bushy tail. A snowy stripe bisected its glossy black fur.

The animal had heard Bobby's wary approach. But it did not flee. Experience had long since taught it that it had little to fear from the average dog.

Across the glade thundered Bobby. The skunk halted, faced about; and set its four feet, firmly. Heavenward whisked its bushy tail.

Ten feet away from his victim, Bobby made a lightning quick detour and a lunge. The sudden detour saved him from the fate in store for most dogs who attack a skunk. The lunge brought him head on to the skunk, before the latter could turn or could brace itself a second time. And a single snap of the mighty jaws ended the brief duel.

Dusk was falling when Bobby, for the second time that day, trotted into camp; and deposited a gift of food at the feet of his master.

Before the killed beast touched ground, Jamie knew well what manner of supper Bobby had brought him. This although his eyes chanced to be closed at the time. For a moment, he was minded to throw the unsavory morsel as far from him as his strength would allow.

Then he paused. Such sign of repulsion might well make Bobby think his forest offerings were

no longer desirable and might cause him to cease hunting. Besides, there was a bare chance that the day might come when even this unsavory beast would stand between the man and famine.

So, awkwardly, disgustedly, he tied the skunk's hind leg to a string and hung it on the outer wall, as far up as he could reach. Nor did he fail to praise and thank the dog as effusively as for the rabbit.

But that night the two supped on pilot biscuit.

In the days that followed, Bobby did not happen upon another skunk. Once, it is true, he found a bit of choice carrion;—the vertebræ of an excessively dead deer. This he lugged with much difficulty to camp; and was grieved at Jamie's failure to eat it.

But for the most part he stuck to rabbit hunting.

Then, as when he and his mate had hunted game, there came a day when no rabbit could be scented in a twenty-mile radius of the lake. By this time, the collie had grown to understand that Jamie depended on him for food; as much as had the helpless puppies, of long ago. And he hated to return to camp, empty-mouthed. It was then that Bobby broke the Law.

From the first, Jamie had taught him that it is mortal sin for a dog to steal chickens. And, to save himself from starving, Bobby would not

have broken a law taught him by Mackellar. But back in camp was the master who relied solely on his collie for daily food. So after a fierce mental struggle, the Law went by the board.

Leaving the forest, Bobby crept, noiseless and unseen, to the nearest of the several scattered farms. Leaping the five-foot chicken-yard fence, he wriggled through the narrow opening of the coop; and emerged, a second later, with a six-pound hen in his jaws. He had reverted to the fox-method of catching and killing a sleeping hen without arousing the coop's other inmates.

It was a dejected and cringing Lochinvar Bobby who padded meekly into camp that night; and laid his trophy down before Jamie.

As a rule, the dog capered gayly about Mackellar when he brought food to him. But now he stood with head and brush adroop.

He had broken the Law. For all he knew, death might be his portion. But he had done it for Jamie's dear sake and not for his own. So he waited unflinchingly to learn what penalty was to be his.

Mackellar, sick to death of eternal rabbit-diet, welcomed the advent of the tender hen with a whoop of joy. And he praised Bobby, even more than usual.

This he did, realizing that it was better to keep alive than to enforce the Law; and resolving to

send cash payment, later, for all murdered fowls. It would be time enough when he and Bobby should return to civilization—if ever they should return to it—to teach anew the mandate that chickens are not to be molested.

"We're fellow-sinners, you and I, Bobby, lad," he said, ruefully, at last. "Fellow-sinners and sharers in guilt. But it's a hantle better than to be fellow-starvers. The ravens, in Holy Writ, fed Elijah. And I doubt me did he ask them if they stole the food or if they bought it over the counter. Am I better than Elijah? I am not. Fall to, Bobby!"

Then began a season of well-being, to the convalescent. Fowls were ridiculously easy to catch. Often, as many as three a night came to Jamie's larder. Never a day passed without the capture of at least one of them.

But, wise in the ways of trapping, Bobby now made most of his excursions after dark or in gray dawn; and never visited the same farm twice in succession. His was the craft of the wolf; plus the trained intelligence of the collie.

Once in a while, the chicken diet was varied by a young turkey or a duck or even a goose. Bobby was ranging wide and hunting brilliantly.

The winter cold was beginning to seep into the unusually late fall. A few snow-flurries varied the November rains. The woods took on a new

silence and bareness. But the hut's firewood and fare were holding out; and the set leg was knitting steadily.

Then, of a morning, after a light fall of snow, Bobby was returning to camp at daybreak, with an enormous turkey gobbler tossed over his shoulder.

He had waited patiently, for an hour, beneath the barnyard tree in whose top branches the gobbler roosted. The bird had at last flown earthward; and the collie had sprung, before it could launch itself into the air again.

Halfway to camp, the dog paused. Far behind him he could hear the confused gabble of human voices. And, instinctively, he knew what the noise implied. He had heard it, more than once; in his own old days of lawless forest-living.

The hue-and-cry was after him.

For weeks, the farm neighborhood had been agog over the depredations to henroost and coop. Men had sat up at night, guns in hand. Spring-traps had been set. From youthful experience and from his uncanny hunting instinct, Bobby had avoided these pitfalls, with ridiculous ease.

But now, on the first morning of a "tracking snow" the hunt was up, in good earnest. The slaying of the turkey had been seen by one of the hunters; as he set out from home to join the rest. Bobby had been forced to move slowly, because

of the heavy weight he carried. His tracks in the snow were plainly visible. Six men were following, fast.

Now, it would have been absurdly simple for the dog to slink off into the undergrowth, wolf-like; confusing the trail and reaching the camp by a roundabout route. But the weeks of wilderness life with Jamie had sharpened his civilization-dulled wits. He knew Mackellar had sought vainly to get in touch with the outer world. He knew that Jamie, not less than three times, had tied notes to his collar and sent him forth to deliver them. Bobby, every time, had failed; to his own keen chagrin. Evidently, Jamie wanted the presence of humans. Evidently, too, in his helpless condition, he was in sore need of such human presence.

Bobby's course of action was taken, as usual, without a moment's hesitancy.

The six men rounded a curve in the trail; and saw, not a furlong ahead of them, a big brown collie trotting unconcernedly along, bearing the stolen gobbler. They broke into a run. Bobby did not hasten his leisurely gait. They gained on him. One of the men halted and fired.

A few spent buckshot spattered around Bobby. He ran a little faster; but not much; and he stuck to the trail, ignoring the shelter of the bushes on either side.

The men redoubled their speed; panting and puffing and swearing. Once in a while, one of them would stop; and take wabbly aim and fire. But the distance was long. And the dog was not easy to hit, there in the elusive daybreak shadows. One pellet raked his ribs; but it was spent, and it did no more than raise a welt.

When the pursuers were forced to travel more slowly, for a few rods, by reason of impediments in the trail, Bobby accommodatingly slackened his pace to fit theirs. Marveling, but ragingly, they kept on.

Out of the forest, into a lakeside clearing, they pounded their way; close after the elusive despoiler of their henroosts. Bobby modestly dived into a copse, before they could fire again.

But, directly in front of them, sat a man in the doorway of the hut—a man with a bandaged leg and a gaunt face—a man who hailed them rapturously.

It was mid-January before Jamie Mackellar was able to take his first unaided walk, through the Beldencroft grounds. Beside him stalked Lochinvar Bobby; vastly elated that he and his god could once more take up their happy strolls together.

Passing around the kennels, they came by accident upon a new chicken-yard that had been

built since Jamie last had wandered through the grounds. In the yard, basking in a patch of winter sunshine, were a flock of pedigreed Penciled Hamburg fowls.

Bobby came to an involuntary pause; ears cocked, eyes questing.

He stared yearningly at the fowls; then mischievously over his shoulder at Jamie Mackellar. Then, with ears flattened back against his skull, he went mincingly past the yard; every line of his magnificent figure the embodiment of smugly conscious virtue.

Jamie scowled after him; unable to forget that fleetingly roguish glance over the shoulder.

"Yes, you self-righteous tyke!" he grumbled. "You're all-fired pious now, aren't you? But it was a mean, insulting look you gave me! The look a scoundrel might give to some chap who shares a monstrous guilty secret with him. I'll never get back all your respect, I s'pose—now that you know my inner man spent three weeks receiving your stolen goods. But there's no need of your rubbing it in, like that, Bobby, lad. Take shame to your glorious worthless self!"

AFTERWORD

I HAVE been asked if the character of Lochinvar Bobby is founded on fact.

It is.

Champion Alstead Aeroplane, a beautiful but listless young collie, had never foraged; to the extent of chasing a mouse. His meals had all been served to him in scientifically balanced rations. He had never been allowed to roam the country at will; had never been in a forest; knew nothing of the Wild.

He was sold, by Mrs. Lunt, his breeder, to Alex Donaldson, a Canadian. The day he arrived at his new owner's Toronto home, Aeroplane ran away. Nor, for ten months, could any trace of him be found.

The collie fled to the woods; made his lair under a disused dance-pavilion, and thence issued forth to live upon the surrounding country.

Throughout the bitter northern winter and the following summer and autumn, Aeroplane hunted his food. Not only did he hunt it, but he found it.

Remember, his whole early life had been spent

in kennel and kennel yard, at his New Jersey birthplace. His immediate ancestors had led similar hothouse lives; as is the way with most supreme-quality collies. Yet, untutored and with no atom of experience, he reverted successfully to the Wild.

Having cleared the neighboring woods of game and the nearer hencoops of so many of their feathered population that locked doors and spring guns became the rule, he sought larger prey.

One hungry winter dawn, he tackled an enormous old goat, that had an enviable fighting-record. Passers-by interrupted the combat, just as the collie's horned foe was qualifying for the heavy-atmosphered goat-heaven.

Aeroplane fled to his lair, through the deep snow; hotly chased and with no time to double or to confuse the trail. There he was surrounded. And thence, battling fiercely, he was dragged forth, a captive.

For three days, in his master's home, he stood trembling; head and tail adroop. Then, philosophically, he took up the burden of civilized life.

The ten months of wilderness adventure had made another dog of him. The listlessness was gone. Gloriously handsome, spirited, carrying an incredible coat, he swept the Canadian show-circuit; winning an unbroken series of victories.

Second only to him are his progeny; inherit-

ing much of their sire's fiery vigor and beauty and coat; and his faculty for annexing blue ribbons in wholesale quantities, at dogshows. I own a son and a daughter of Aeroplane. Since the deaths of my flawless Bruce and of my golden Champion Sunnybank Sigurd, I have no other dogs to compare in quality with these two children of Lochinvar Bobby's prototype and with their offspring.

By the way, in my story I made Bobby's breeder a scoundrel. Needless to say, that part of my yarn is rank fiction. The sale of Aeroplane was conducted in wholly honorable fashion. His breeder, Mrs. Lunt, stands in highest repute for fair-dealing. Nor is Jamie Mackellar drawn from Alex Donaldson.

When I tacked the prefix, "Lochinvar," to my story of the gallant young collie that came out of the West, I did not know there was a collie-breeder who had adopted and registered "Lochinvar" as the name for his high-quality kennels.

Indeed, several chapters of this book had been written, and one or two of them had been published in *The Saturday Evening Post,* before I learned the embarrassing fact. Then Mr. Stuart A. Weiss wrote me he was owner of the Lochinvar Collie Kennels, in Richmond, Virginia. I had not painted an especially lovable or even

decent character, in the proprietor of the book's Lochinvar Kennels.

Mr. Weiss had every reason to feel affronted. And that is just what Mr. Weiss did not feel. In reply to my letter of disclaimer and of apology, he proved that a man who handles collies for any length of time is likely to absorb his dogs' square sportsmanship.

Not only did Mr. Weiss refuse to take offense, but he gave me cordial permission to go on using the Lochinvar name, in my stories. For which, once more, I thank him.

THE END.

SONOMA
COUNTY
LIBRARY

to renew • para renovar

707.566.0281

sonomalibrary.org